Will!!! On Ice

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Will!!! On Ice

by TigerPrawn

Summary

A Hannigram version of Yuri!!! On Ice

After coming last in the Finals, 23 year old Will Graham is on the verge of retiring from Figure Skating altogether. Everything changes when his idol, Hannibal Lecter, decides to become his coach.

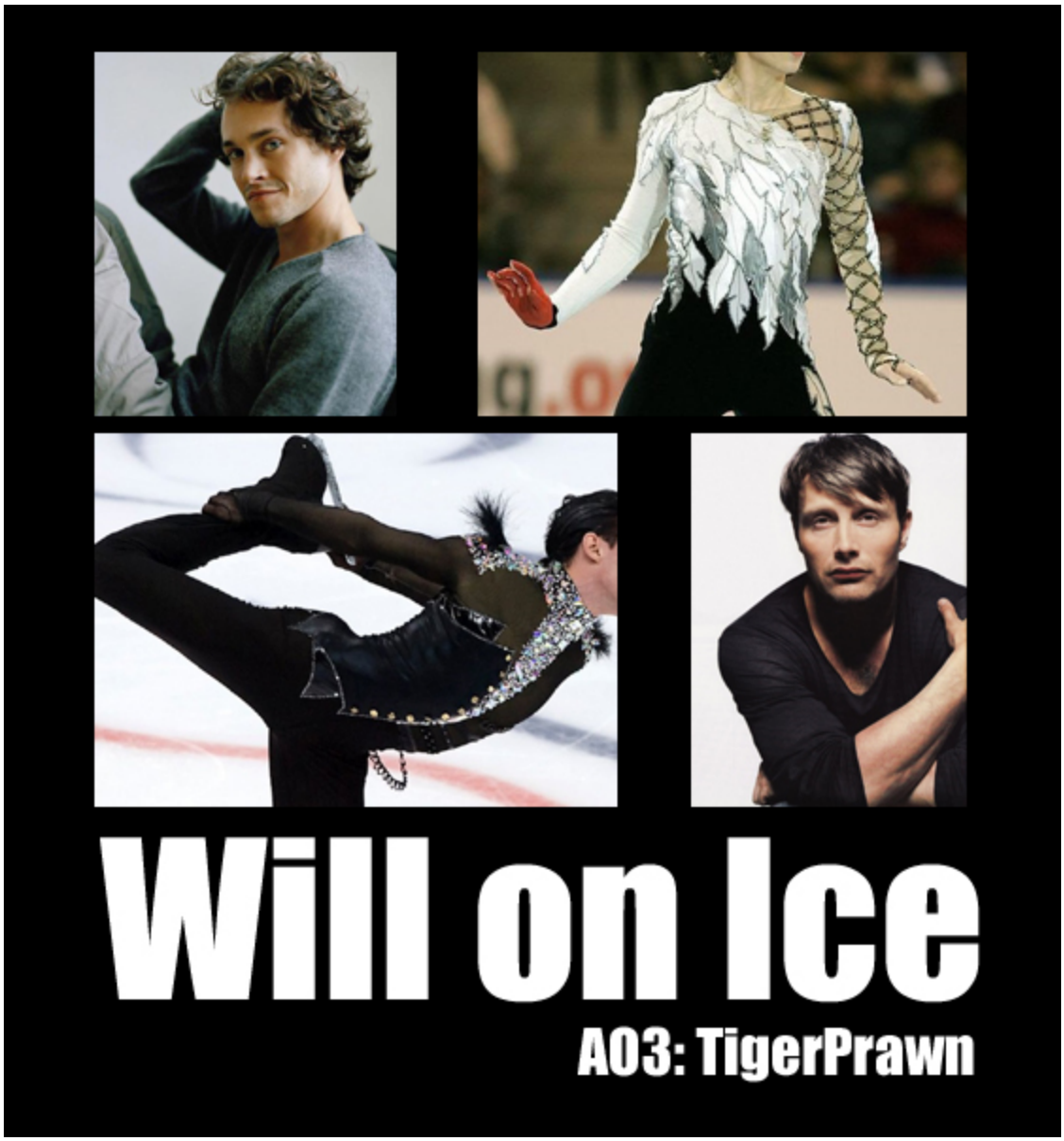
Notes

Feeling pretty down I decided to binge watch Yuri!!! On Ice after seeing so much about it. I am utterly in love with it and just couldn't stop imagining a Hannigram version. I couldn't find any, so I've written one.

This could have gone one of two ways - fluff and sweetness like my Write Here, Write Now Author AU, or full on cannibal and becoming darkness along the lines of my Beautiful William

So... this is a fluffy AU. If someone does a cannibalesque version please drop me a line as I'd love to read it, I just don't have it in me to write anything but fluff right now.

Chapter 1



One Year Ago

He never fails to surprise me. Ever since the first time I saw him skating, it's been an unending chain of surprises.

The image of Hannibal Lecter, the first time he had seen the World Champion skate, clouded his mind. The visual interlaid with year upon year of incredible skill and performance. He had idolised the man so long, aspired to be him, someday surpass him - that skating on the same ice was almost overwhelming.

At 23 years old, Will was doing ok, he'd got to his first Grand Prix Final. He tried not to let doubts creep in, but they did anyway. He was already getting too old, and this was his first

chance - so it might as well be his last as well.

He needed to focus, think about Lecter, think about what he would do. How he would skate.

Will took a breath and held it as he pushed off from the side and glided to his start position on the ice. The same ice Lecter had skated upon. His mind flashed to an image of his childhood room back at his parent's house, plastered with posters of Hannibal from throughout his career. Each magnificent. Each beautiful.

The music started.

*

The fall had not hurt has much as the blow to his pride. How had he been so delusional to think he could ever hope to be as great as Lecter.

"Don't read them!" His coach stood over him as he scrolled through the sports updates.

-Will Graham fell to last place, is this season his last?

Will clenched his jaw. He had tried. He had moved to the training facility in Baltimore to prepare for this season. He had pushed himself the hardest he ever had… right up until just before the Finals. The dog he'd had from a puppy died. On top of that the pressure of the competition had him binge eating creole comfort food. He was in the worst physical and mental shape of his life when the Finals arrived. He hated himself for the chance he had blown. He didn't even deserve to be in the same city as someone like Hannibal Lecter, let alone in the same competition.

Will thought that the worst was behind him. Nothing could be more humiliating than the tumble he had taken, putting him in last place. But that was before he went to the bathroom to take a moment, to gather himself back together before facing the crowds on the way out. It was before the other Will cornered him in the bathroom.

Will Francis Dolarhyde, usually went just by Frank - though he was known in the press as the Great Red Dragon. For some reason the fact that there was another Will, a lesser Will as he considered it, in the competition irked the teen. Having just won the junior circuit the boy was self confident and brash, everything Will wasn't but probably should be to survive competition.

"I'm going to be competing in the senior division next year." Dolarhyde was very slightly shorter than him, but intimidating all the same as he stood toe to toe - angry expression and finger in Will's face. "We don't need two Will's in the same bracket. Incompetents like you should just retire already." He was practically screaming in Will's face.

When Frank turned and walked out Will took a stuttering breath. He was trembling. He hadn't been scared, but overwhelmed, unprepared. Little things in life were often just as overwhelming, but this had shaken him to his core. He had gone to the bathroom for quiet space, to take himself out of the noise and activity that had him on edge. The bustle that balanced out the peace he found in the silence of the ice.

Will adjusted his glasses, pushing them up his nose. He only really needed them for reading, but wore them almost permanently when he wasn't skating - a defense. A shield to hide behind. He took several more minutes to even be near ready to face the crowds, but forced himself back out so he could just get out of the place. Go back to Baltimore and finish college, then maybe go home - Hasetsu, Louisiana. He hadn't been back in five years… He pushed the thought down. Tried to ignore the swell of guilt at how his dad had struggled with the hotel and bar he was supposed to help run.

He walked back out and grabbed his bag. They were almost at the exit when Will heard his name and turned.

"Will, listen to me. About the free routine, your step sequence could use some-"

Hannibal Lecter's voice. But it wasn't aimed at him. He was talking to the other Will - Frank - they skated for the same team. He sighed and felt a heavy weight in his chest. Hannibal probably didn't even know who he was. Which was probably better. He'd rather not be known - not be remembered for his complete ineptitude. Frank was right, he should just retire. There was no point in trying again next season, more young and talented competition coming up while he was slipping further down. But the thought of not skating cut a pain through his chest. He didn't want to think about it. He wanted to put the future off forever.

He watched as Hannibal continued trying to advise Frank as they walked. Frank looked pretty unhappy about it, the attitude all self confident and successful fifteen year olds had. Will felt the heavy weight tighten into a ball that he thought might collapse within him and leave him empty.

Will let out a sigh and shouldered his bag. The action must have caught Hannibal's eye as the young man turned and beamed Will a smile from across the room. There was a moment of silence between them where Will was unable to say anything, to even think anything, and Hannibal seemed confused for a moment. But then realisation crossed his face and his smile grew wider and warmer as he said -

"A commemorative photo? Sure!"

Will felt heat rise in his face, tears prick in his eyes. This wasn't what he had wanted. What he had hoped for. He looked at the floor as he turned and left.

I was an idiot to think I could finally meet my idol on the same playing field.

It was over.

Present

College was done. He'd graduated. He hadn't spoken to his coach in months. Skating felt like a dream rather than reality. A dream that had taken him somewhere he had not been able to realise - had not been good enough to realise. And now he was going home.

The trip from Baltimore back to Louisiana had been crowded and uncomfortable. A discomfort that turned out to be almost preferable to the one he encountered when he alighted

at the local station nearest his family home and business.

Five years was a long time and some things had changed, been repaired and renewed. That could be expected. He didn't expect the posters of him lining the walls of the station. He didn't expect his old teacher, Bev Katz, to be waiting for him. His face warmed and he wished the weather in Louisiana were more like Baltimore so that he could hide his face in a scarf at least.

Bev greeted him excitedly - drawing the attention of the small crowds moving about them. His face heated and he retreated inwardly, cringing as people began talking around him, about him. He didn't want to hear what they had to say - how he must have disappointed them all.

Bev was grinning all the same. She was just about to say something when an older gentleman appeared at his arm -

"I'd like to shake your hand…"

Will shied away. "Sorry, I'm in a hurry." It sounded terse, rude, and he knew it. The reaction had been automatic and unthinking - he was not social, not good with people.

"Hannibal Lecter is always nice to his fans!" Bev admonished him angrily before turning him into the path of more well wishers until he had shaken them each by the hand and accepted their pleasantries. By the time Bev let him move on, he was barely able to breath, his heart racing and palms sweating. What didn't help was the deep embarrassment and humiliation - the people of his home town who had supported him as a local, and he had let them all down.

He was tired and felt low, lower than he thought he would on returning. Only made worse as Bev dragged through the empty streets. It wasn't high season any more, but there were usually some tourists all year round.

"It's so quiet." It saddened him in a way he hadn't considered. He hadn't let himself consider. Because that meant considering what impact the lower tourism had on his dad's business. The Hasetsu Castle was a small hotel with bar and diner, their main selling point being the well situated hot tubs in the back, that offered relief from the relentless heat. When he was a child business had boomed, local industry was thriving and people came from all over to use the sporting facilities, including world renowned skaters. It all felt pretty ironic in that moment. Depressingly so.

"Yeah, hardly anyone skates here now." Even Bev looked down which was something he'd rarely seen. "But you're back now!" She grinned and lightly punched his arm. "You'll cheer everyone up."

That much at least seemed true when they got to the diner and Bev loudly announced them. "I've brought Will home!"

His dad came out from the back, apron fastened at his waist and smile on his face. "Thank you for fetching him Bev." He smiled before turning to Will and taking him in. It had been so long. His father's hair was now completely grey, even white in places.

“I’m sorry it’s been so long.” Will said, and meant it. He loved his dad, but it had been hard after his mother had died. Leaving had been all too easy and just the thought of coming home had become harder each passing year.

“That’s alright boy. I’m sorry I didn’t make your graduation… business, you know.”

He did know. There wasn’t enough money to pay for cover. His dad taking the time off to attend would have meant the loss of valuable business that he could ill afford. Will gave a reassuring smile and started to shrug out of his jacket, finally succumbing to the humidity.

“Will!” His name came out as a cry from Bev’s lips as she looked at him in shock. “Oh my god Will!” Before he could stop her, her hand reached across and took a grip of the extra pounds he was carrying around his middle.

“Always did put weight on easily.” His dad commented with a nod. Bev looked horrified. For years she had taught him to dance, to improve his skating through the use of ballet, and now he was a slob as far as she was concerned. His dad huffed a laugh. “Might need to ease of the seafood gumbo for a while.”

*

Will had managed to excuse himself after the necessary hellos to the necessary people, and his reassurance to Bev that he would get back into shape. As far as anyone was concerned he was taking a break, but skating was still on the cards. If he worked hard he could go back the next season. Personally he was still uncertain. He'd messed up before and jumped back in, not from competitions this big though. Something had changed this time. His relationship with skating had changed and he wasn't sure it would ever be the same to him again.

He took himself out to one of the hot tubs for a while and lost himself in thought. He had to give more serious thought to his future. But deep down he knew he wouldn’t have let himself get so out of shape if he had planned on going back. Really he should do what he should have done years ago and help his dad. He had thought he could help financially, back when he thought he had a shot at anything. Before he ruined his own chances with poor execution and the damage to his self-confidence that each stumbled turn brought. The least he could do was help in the family business.

Despite the place being practically empty, Will couldn’t take any comfort in the refreshing quiet of the hot tub. As nice as it was to have this space to himself, it should be bustling. Each tub should be hosting laughing and drinking - paying - customers. How had he not known how bad things had got? *I hadn’t wanted to know.*

Will bit back his self loathing and stepped up out of the tub and into the bar.

The only patron there was Bev, and he wondered if his dad even ever let her pay - she was more family than anything. She was watching the sports news, his heart giving one irregular thud as Hannibal came on the screen. Effortlessly gliding across the ice, his body slinking like that of a cat. He was breathtakingly beautiful in a way that awed Will. The commentators reflected on how many had called this the last season for the 27 year old, but having just

made it his fifth consecutive Grand Prix win, there was every chance he could return to the competition the following season.

Will felt a stab in his chest, a tight pain at the thought of his lost opportunity. Even if Hannibal returned to next season, he wouldn't be there. He had spent years dreaming of becoming as good as Hannibal Lecter, even of surpassing him. Aweing Lecter with his own talent. What a joke that was now. How someone like Hannibal Lecter would laugh at the very idea of it.

Will's throat tightened and he was barely able to get the words out - "I'm… going to go practice."

*

He might not ever compete again, but that would never change one thing - skating had been his refuge, his escape. It eased him through life and he needed to get that feeling back. The joy and contentment it brought him had been marred by the pressure of competition. But now, back home, all those years turned back. As his own thoughts and feelings weighed heavily, he knew there was only one place he could go for a reprieve.

Despite the encroaching dusk and passing of the years, he found his way easily to the rink. It looked almost unchanged, it felt like coming home.

"It's been a while Alana." He walked up to the counter and smiled at his old friend.

"I heard you were coming home. It's so good to see you!" Her voice and expression full of warmth. He'd missed her. He hadn't made nearly the effort he should have to stay in touch more.

As children they had skated together, she a few years older, he had idolised her. Right up until the first time they watched Hannibal skating in the televised Junior World Championships - his mind only filled with Hannibal from that point on. Memories flooded back of their childhood, the passing of years as she sheltered him from Margot's teasing, adored him as a younger brother, pushed him to be his best in the hopes that she would one day see him compete against Hannibal Lecter - their shared aspiration for him.

"Uh, I want to show you something." He hesitated over the words before taking her hand and guiding her around the desk. She went willingly with him to the rink. "I've been practicing this since the competitions ended."

He hadn't intended to tell anyone, much less show anyone. But with Alana there and those memories cutting through him, it felt right to share it with her. Even if no one else ever saw him skate again, he would share this with his old friend.

He pushed off his right foot and glided out into the empty rink, taking his first position. He heard Alana gasp before he'd even started - her realisation as he took up the pose of one of Hannibal's most iconic routines. He pushed off once more and let go. Let himself soar as he moved from turn to spin. Ignoring the ache in his arms, and the tension in his legs as his mind

was filled only with the image of Hannibal Lecter. Of the perfection he could only hope to emulate.

As he came to a halt, hands posed, body rigid and lungs burning, he heard Alana sob over his own panted breath.

“Oh my god, Will. That was… it was beautiful.” An excited and joyous tone that filled Will’s heart. “A perfect copy of Hannibal! I thought… I thought you’d be depressed.”

Will huffed a laugh as he skated back to her, his extra weight telling as his middle now ached from the exertion. “I got bored of being depressed. I wanted to get my love of skating back, and I kept thinking of how we used to copy Hannibal when we were young. Alana, I...”

He couldn’t finish telling her his doubts over the future and the end of his career, because he was interrupted by an excited voice - “Will! Is it true you might retire?”

From the mouths of babes. Alana shushed the child that had appeared at her side and picked him up.

“Morgan has grown since you saw him last huh?” A reproachful if kind smile. “He’s a big fan.”

“We all are.” Margot’s voice sounded from the doorway and she joined them, kissing her wife on the cheek before turning a warm smile on Will. “You should come and practice, anytime you like Will, really anytime.”

Will smiled and nodded. Skating in front of Alana, her reaction, it had sparked something.

Five years is a long time to be away. I tried to ignore a lot of things by focusing on skating. I wonder what I need, so I can keep skating on my own.

*

Will sat in the bar watching the television. He felt like it might be some form of sadomasochism, watching the sports updates about the Lithuanian team. It was bad enough watching Frank own the ice. He was almost ten years younger than Will, but he had been right. Next season they would have been in the same division, and he would have surpassed Will easily based on his abysmal performance at the Finals. When the camera changed to a shot of Hannibal watching at rinkside, Will got up and left. He didn’t even want to face images of the man. It felt like a fresh failure over again.

Something within him broke and then snapped back. He couldn’t let this be the end. As he went up to his room he could see only the image of Hannibal in his mind, skating, being perfect. Will wanted that. He needed that perfection just once.

I’ve got to skate on the same ice as Hannibal again!

He sat on the floor and looked around the room. Untouched since he had left, still full of his childhood. Walls covered with posters of Hannibal. Skating had been such a huge part of his life, he'd been fooling himself to think he could give it up.

His phone pinged with a notification and he stared at it in confusion for a moment before realising what he was looking at. A cold chill ran through him, his face heated at the same time as it seemed the blood drained from it. His mouth was dry but bile threatened at the back of his tongue.

-[VIDEO] Will Graham skating Hannibal Lecter's Program

His phone rang then and it was Margot, she was apologising. He could hear Alana in the background a raised voice, sobs from Morgan as Margot just kept apologising that he had uploaded the video that Will didn't even realise Alana had taken. He repeated over and over for them to delete it and then hung up. Mortified, he hoped this was as far as it would go.

Minutes later his phone pinged again.

-[BEV] OMG WILL!!! That video, I can't believe it. It's being retweeted everywhere!

Will crawled under the covers on his bed and squeezed his eyes shut - his face burning. This was a nightmare. He only hoped Bev was still prone to over exaggeration and she meant that only a few people had seen it. Maybe it would blow over by morning. He turned off his phone.

*

Will woke and stretched. And then groaned and curled back in on himself as he remembered the previous night. It was late, he'd overslept, but he wondered how long he could hide in his room before anyone remembered he was there. Turned out not to be very long - his dad's voice calling up the stairs asking him to come down and get the hot tubs skimmed and ready for the day. It was the least he could do. He pulled on some loose sports pants and a thin t-shirt before heading down.

As he opened the back door a dog rushed him. It bounded at him in a friendly manner and jumped up excitedly.

"Dad… there's a dog…" They didn't usually allow pets with the guests.

"Oh yeah…" His dad called out and he could hear him approaching. As he waited, Will reached down and petted the dog. It looked so much like his own that had passed just before the Finals. The dog his parents had bought him as a puppy, the one he had wanted because it looked so much like the dog that Hannibal had in all his pictures. He'd even called the dog Hannibal, his face reddened at the memory.

"Friendly pup, belongs to a foreign guest." His dad said. Will's mind spun a little. Did he mean? "He's out in a hot tub." his dad finished and jerked a thumb at the back door.

It couldn't be… There's no way.

Will practically bowled his dad over as he raced through the back door and out into the garden, round the corner to the tubs. His mind was reeling, because things like this didn't happen. Whatever this was. He was sure it wasn't really happening.

He rounded the corner and came to a hard stop. Hannibal was reclining in one of the tubs but looked up when he heard Will.

“Hannibal? What are you doing here?” He wasn’t sure how he forced the words out. He wasn’t sure that he was really seeing what he was seeing. Perhaps he was going mad. A tumour or some other brain condition - he'd recently seen a documentary on encephalitis...

Hannibal gave a bright and wide smile, standing as he did so and wading towards Will. The man was naked, water glistening over his toned body. Will’s breath hitched and he looked away, knowing his face was burning.

“Will, I want to help you. I want to help you win the Grand Prix. I’m going to be your new coach!” The man gave a wolfish smile as Will’s eyes flicked back to his in disbelief. Hannibal’s smile grew and Will thought for a moment it might consume him.

“What?” Was all he could manage through the tight grip in his throat.

He was a genius who never failed to surprise me.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

> Will is trying to adjust to Hannibal being in his life, when another unexpected guest arrives in Hasetsu, Louisiana.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Back home for the first time in five years, I was thinking of how to keep my career going.

Will looked down at Hannibal. The man was sleeping soundly on the floor - as though it were perfectly comfortable - curled up with the dog he brought with him, Winston.

Is he really here?

The whole thing was so surreal that Will had to wonder whether he was brain sick and hallucinating. Even in competition they had never really said two words to each other, and now the man was asleep on the floor. He was beautiful. Peaceful. Will found it hard to imagine there was so much energy coiled within him, but he'd borne witness to it many times. Each time his heart had soared as though he were on the ice himself.

Hannibal is a living legend, my idol! How can he be here?

Will was deep in denial. Images of Hannibal were jumbled in his head. All the performances he had seen both televised and live. The times they had passed in corridors, Will not daring to look up. Hannibal telling him he would be his coach and help him win the Grand Prix - whilst naked in the hot tub.

He can't really be here!

Bev's entrance made it clear that Hannibal was indeed real. She burst in through the door, a ball of energy.

"He's asleep on the floor!" She near shouted, grinning and pointing at Hannibal, practically hopping from foot to foot.

"Sure, state the obvious." Will replied quietly whilst trying to shoosh her by making gestures with his hands to lower the volume. Bev Katz default setting when excited was around a solid 9, but unchecked could rise to an 11. She was still grinning all the same.

"This is big news in Lithuania you know! It's all over the internet. They say he was taking next season off to consider his next move." Her grin made his jaw ache in sympathy as she

continued excitedly, “but when he saw the video of you skating his routine, he was inspired! And that’s when he decided to be your coach!” She was almost vibrating with excitement. “Hannibal came here because he chose you Will, it’s incredible!”

Chose? It rattled through Will’s head and made him feel a little sick. This sort of thing didn’t happen to him, people didn’t react this way to him, mostly because he held them at arm’s reach. It was overwhelming and unbelievable. It had to be a mistake. He felt his cheeks redden and he wished he could be anywhere at that moment than in a room with a sleeping Hannibal and excited Bev.

Perhaps he could hide? He wasn’t above considering running back to Baltimore, anything but the excruciating awkwardness of having to face Hannibal. How could *he* inspire Hannibal? *Hannibal Lecter?!* The thought of the man watching him skate his routine filled him with a heated embarrassment. How awful it must have seemed to him.

Hannibal sneezed.

Will froze.

A moment later than man was sitting - one fluid motion as though he were made of liquid. He turned to face Will with a smile that had him reel back slightly. Hannibal yawned a little and stretched, the robe he had borrowed from the hotel slipped down one shoulder revealing toned and tanned musculature. Will turned away, his face hot.

“I’m hungry.” Hannibal said softly. Will felt immediately like a terrible host. The jet lag, the travelling, he should have been more accommodating, instead of completely thrown by the man’s existence much less his presence.

“Um, what would you like?” Will asked, trying not to sound as nervous as he actually was.

“Hmm.” Hannibal considered for a moment, his eyes never leaving Will as he gazed at him, something glinting there. Will would think it was teasing, but it really wasn’t. It was something else that Will couldn’t put a name to. “As your coach, Will, I’d like to know what your favourite food is.” The smile was charming. Disarming.

“Huh?…”

*

“Fantastic!” Hannibal’s reaction seemed completely genuine and warm when Will’s dad placed the seafood gumbo in front of him. He tucked straight in, forking out a meaty shrimp before wolfing down several more mouthfuls. “This is amazing!” He spoke with his mouth full, which seemed to please Will’s dad which had Will smiling too.

“I’m glad you like it.” Will ignored the now seemingly permanent heat in his cheeks that warmed anew.

“Will gains weight easily.” Bev made the offhand comment as she was tucking into her own bowl. “He was only allowed to eat it when he won a competition.” She let out a light laugh

but Will fumed all the same.

Before he could retort, Hannibal asked - “So have you eaten it recently?”

“Yes, um, yeah I eat it all the time.” Will smiled, caught off guard by Hannibal’s interest in him.

“Why?” Hannibal chuckled but there was no malice, not mean but not teasing. “You haven’t won anything.”

Will wanted the ground to swallow him up as Hannibal continued, merrily talking about him having to lose weight. That he needed to get back into shape before getting back on the ice. Throughout the tone was far from cruel - perhaps just a little too personal, the sort of thing a friend might say. They weren’t friends.

Will knew Hannibal didn’t intend to be hurtful. He hugged his arms around his ample gut and winced, humiliated.

*

Will could only think of how the manual labour would help his weigh situation, as he dragged the last of Hannibal’s excessive luggage to the best room they had. The hotel was almost empty, the only guests were a few random backpackers in the cheapest rooms. This room had been his mum’s pride and joy - she had decorated it herself.

“Such a small room! So quaint!” Hannibal let out a charming laugh as Will dragged the last case in.

“It’s the honeymoon suite! The biggest we have…” Will was trying not to be offended. He knew Hannibal must be used to the finer things in life - he’d read he was some sort of nobility, wealthy at least, before his skating success. If it were just him he might feel embarrassed, but as the room was in his father’s hotel, meant so much to his mother... he felt a little hurt on their behalf.

Hannibal’s expression dropped and he stepped forward to close the space between them a little. The concern in his face made Will ache. “I’m sorry Will, I sometimes don’t think before I speak. I didn’t mean to offend you.”

“Oh, no. No, it’s fine.” Will gave a lopsided and half-hearted smile. It was nice that Hannibal had apologised at least.

He felt sweaty from dragging the luggage, and knew his palms had not stopped being clammy since Hannibal had arrived. He took a step back, self conscious of how he might look or smell.

Hannibal frowned. “You seem nervous, are you ok?”

“Sure um, yeah. I…” Will floundered.

“If it’s about the coaching fee, please, you can pay this after you achieve success!” Hannibal returned a lopsided smile of his own that made Will’s heart race.

“Um, thanks…” he could barely get the words out as Hannibal moved closer, stepping into the space he had just retreated from, and then closer still.

“Will, I want you to tell me everything about you,” Hannibal ran a hand lightly over Will’s arm as he moved forward so that their bodies were practically touching. “What kind of rink do you skate on? Tell me about your hometown?” Hannibal’s hand moved down his arm and took hold of his hand in a gentle grasp, bringing it up as though he might kiss it. He looked deeply into Will’s eyes, “is there a girl you like?”

Will was struggling to breathe. He had rarely been this physically close to anyone and it was so entirely overwhelming. The feel of it, the smell - how good Hannibal smelt. His heart raced as Hannibal continued -

“Before we start practicing, I’d like us to become friends. Friendship can sometimes involve a breach of individual separateness.” Hannibal’s free hand came up then to gently stroke down Will’s cheek and cup his face in hand. Will wondered if he was going to lean in and-

The thought was one too far, too much. Beyond too much. Will reeled back, not only from Hannibal’s grasp but out of the room until he stood panting in the corridor looking back at Hannibal’s concerned face. How could Hannibal hope to know him when he hardly knew himself?

“Will, are you ok? Where are you going?”

“I… Nowhere, I…” he couldn’t explain his reaction to Hannibal. The man was so confident and tactile. So overwhelming that Will wasn’t even sure of himself around him. On edge, nervous, aching and clammy. Allowing someone, allowing Hannibal, so close to him - physically, emotionally - it was too much. Made him too vulnerable.

I’m scared to be close to you.

Will excused himself and practically ran back to his own room.

An hour later he was cursing how small the hotel was as he heard footfall, and then a knocking at his door. Hannibal’s voice was muffled through the wood-

“Will, can we talk? Perhaps I can come in so we can get to know each other?”

“No!” Will shouted back without hesitation. An automatic reaction that stunned himself - the same automatic reaction that lead him to often decide he didn’t find a person interesting. It was easier that way. “Please, I need… please… I can’t.”

“Very well.” Kind but resigned. And then feet retreating again. He sat on the bed, his head in his hands for a moment before springing up with a renewed energy fuelled by anger - though at whom he wasn’t sure. His face burned as he took in the posters hanging on his walls. He tore them down one after the other as tears burned in his eyes, frustration ripping through him

until he dropped, exhausted, back to the bed. He caught his breath for a moment and then straightened up, ashamed of his outburst. He started to collect up the posters and flatten them out, fold them neatly, blood still pumping hard around his body, thrumming in his ears.

Why did it have to be so overwhelming? Why was this all so difficult?

We've barely ever spoken because I always put him on such a high pedestal, and now he's right here… I get it now. My heart's pounding because of how happy I am...

*

"What? What! Oh my god!" Alana's pitch was just short of screaming. She had been excited when Hannibal had walked into reception with Will, but now hearing he was going to be coaching him, she was almost ear piercing.

"Um, yeah… so, can we use the rink as our home base for the training?" Will asked. He knew Alana and Margot would never have refused before, but with Hannibal there, the excitement in their eyes spoke volumes. Alana nodded enthusiastically whilst Margot just grinned.

Hannibal was on the ice by the time Margot found him rinkside and squeezed an arm around his shoulders. The touch shocked him for a moment before he relaxed into it and she released him with a smile. "Oh wow, this must be like a dream come true for you!"

"Sure…" Will half shrugged, trying to smile. It was, of course it was. But it was also terrifying. By the time Will was a twelve year old, sat glued to the televised finals, Hannibal at 16 was already number one in the world. He looked out over the ice. Hannibal moved like poetry… no, like something that couldn't really be captured in words at all.

I've imitated him for years, trying to catch up to him. How could seeing the video of me skating his routine inspire him?

Hannibal interrupted his thoughts, calling to Margot - "he's not allowed on the ice until he's back in shape." A tease, a smile. Warm and gentle and aimed at Will. An encouragement like he'd never received before. Perhaps with Hannibal he could win.

*

Bev shook her head at him and then demonstrated the move again. It was so long since he had done such intense ballet that his muscles ached in ways he had forgotten. The extra weight left him breathless and the heaviness around his middle hurt.

"Maybe he just wanted a break?" She was thinking aloud her ideas on Hannibal's appearance in Hasetsu, only voicing one of the many thoughts he'd already had himself. It still stung to hear - why on earth would Hannibal come here for him? She must have read the hurt in his expression because she smiled and booped his nose. "The main thing is you've decided to keep skating. So let's get you into shape!"

Bev used to travel the world when she was a dancer, before she became a teacher. Will spent more of his childhood in her studio than at home. She was the one who had encouraged him to start skating, always cheered him on. And ballet was what refined him, what made his skating special - he always thought. He could never thank her enough for everything she had taught him.

"...But she likes to meddle." Will finished telling Hannibal about Bev Katz and watched as the man's smile grew.

"Do you have feelings for Ms Katz?" He asked through his grin. Will almost fell off of the bench in the public gardens he had been using for balance practice.

"What? No!" he felt the colour drain from his face.

"Do you have a girlfriend?" Hannibal was still smiling as he asked, a gentle smile now, not lascivious or teasing, just the warm interest of a friend.

"No..." Will answered cautiously, unsure of the relevance.

"Any ex-girlfriends?" Hannibal's smile persisted as he moved slightly closer, waiting for the answer.

"I don't want... This is personal…" Will's face burned with anger as much as embarrassment. He regained firm footing and backed away. "I don't want to talk about this sort of stuff…"

"Will wait, ok, let's talk about me then… my first girlfriend was-"

"Stop!" Will covered his ears. He didn't want to hear. They had still barely talked, hardly knew each other and Hannibal wanted things from him that he had never even discussed with his closest friends. Things he rarely even admitted to himself. Things it was easier to ignore. Keep skating and ignore.

He slumped down onto the bench as Hannibal fell silent, looking confused, maybe even a little hurt. Minutes passed before either of them said anything. Will had been prepared to wave away any apologies, perhaps he could have reacted better, but instead Hannibal had asked -

"Will, tell me about that place?" He pointed to the imposing building so close to the hotel.

"Oh!" Will was surprised, "that's Fort Hasetsu." he allowed a low chuckle. "Rumour has it as a training house for ninjas."

Hannibal joined in the laugh. "Fantastic!" He pulled out his phone and took a photo of it. "Can we take a closer look?"

*

Will hadn't thought much of it at the time, other than to be happy that Hannibal was enjoying himself in Hasetsu. He knew he was certainly terrible company for the man. He'd probably get fed up and leave before Will was deemed fit to return to the ice. He hadn't given a second

thought to Hannibal snapping selfies in front of the Fort and then posting them on his instagram. He hadn't given any thought at all to this until his father opened up the diner for breakfast the next morning to a bustling crowd of journalists asking for confirmation of rumours that Hannibal was staying in the hotel.

Customers flooded in all day, some of the young women even asking whether it was possible to share a hot tub with Hannibal. Far from being overwhelmed, Will's dad was overjoyed, welcoming back the booming business he hadn't seen in years.

Will was less thrilled. It was one of the things he had hated whilst growing up. Strangers coming and going and sharing his space. Bumping into him, tapping his shoulder - one time when he had been waiting tables in the diner an old woman pinched his ass. He tried to be happy for his dad, but redoubled his own efforts to get into shape - neatly avoiding the place at the same time. Running, ballet, gym, repeat, over and over, whilst the cash register rang.

One Week Later

The crowd of press and fans outside the rink burst into a fresh sort of uproar before Will turned the corner, so he knew it hadn't been inspired by his arrival. He ignored them as he had every day, continued jogging until he got to the centre and stopped at the closed doors, leaning forward into them and panting. A smile broke across his face. He was finally back down to his goal weight - which meant Hannibal would finally let him skate!

He huffed an eager laugh as he pulled back from the door to open it, he was about to walk in when he felt himself shoved forward. A hard knock sending him flying through the door and to the ground. Will wheeled instantly and glared up at the perpetrator as the front doors closed on the animated press crews.

William Francis Dolarhyde. Frank Dolarhyde. They called him The Great Ice Dragon of Lithuania

He was wearing one of the dragon motif shirts that they sold in the markets. It suited him, his look as much as his name - animal prints and silky blonde hair, a barely visible scar above his upper lip. Fierce and powerful was how he was often described - skating with a skill and confidence beyond his years.

As he remained on the floor, Dolarhyde towering over him, Will reasoned that it was ridiculous for him to feel intimidated by a fifteen year old.

"This is all your fault!" Frank spat the words out as though they held venom. He was practically snarling at Will. "You think you are his most avid fan? I looked up to him!" He stepped away from Will and slumped back against the reception desk. "We made a deal! He said if I could win the Junior Championships without quads then he would choreograph a program just for me!" The words were bitter and angry. "We shook on it! But now he is here!"

Will continued to watch the teenager as he got up from the floor and brushed himself down. He had a sudden sense of the boy and could empathise with him. Something told him as he had collected posters of Hannibal, Frank had made a scrapbook - probably a secret and

precious thing. Probably next to a scrapbook of his own achievements - of which the teen had many. “We haven’t even got to talking about programs-”

“What?!” Frank snarled as he pushed from the wall and loomed at Will once more. “You made him take a year off from skating to coach you, isn’t that enough?! You don’t deserve him, you... Just retire already!”

Will remembered their meeting in the bathroom after the finals where Frank had said the same then. He really did think Will was worthless, wasn’t a real threat. But that was the only time they had met in competition and he hadn’t been at his best. Now, with Hannibal driving him on, he was going to be better than his best ever had been before, he just knew it. Will smiled at the teenager, slightly elated. He must have promise if Frank felt threatened by him.

“You need to talk to Hannibal yourself.” Will huffed with a grin, turning and walking to the rink, knowing that Frank was following him. He felt smug. It had been a week and he had known Hannibal wanted to be there, wanted to coach him, even if he wasn’t quite sure why. But the confrontation with Frank suddenly changed things in his mind - Hannibal wanted to be there with him. Hannibal wanted it. He could have stayed with Frank, could have skated another season or helped coach Frank, but he had still chosen to seek out Will. The thought made him feel warm inside, made him tremble a little. An unusual but vaguely pleasant sensation.

When they reached rinkside, Will was surprised by the shocked sound from Frank’s mouth - not quite a gasp. Hannibal was skating - he was perfection, it made Will’s heart soar to watch.

“This… it was his program for next season.” Frank muttered. “Hannibal was already putting together routines for next season… But he was torn. He didn’t feel like he was surprising anyone anymore, that’s what held the power for him. But now, no matter what he does, no one is surprised.”

Will looked out to Hannibal on gliding across the ice.

He never fails to surprise me.

“If you don’t have any inspiration left, you’re as good as dead in this sport. He knows that better than anyone.” Frank continued. His tone had been, if not friendly, professional - perhaps a little reverential. But it turned hard, petulant, once more. “Perhaps he’ll let me skate his program if he’s not skating this season. I know I can surprise people more than he can now. But I need his help if I am going to win the Grand Prix Final.”

He seemed to be thinking aloud more than anything and Will found himself on the defensive at the words, his momentary confidence dwindling once more. Could Frank steal Hannibal away? The thought tore through his brain and sent a jolt through his body. The thought of the loss was difficult. He’d already lost so much in his life, even after a week he knew he couldn’t lose Hannibal.

“Looking good Hannibal!” Frank called across the rink as Hannibal’s routine came to an end - the words echoed with as little feeling as they had been uttered. All the same Hannibal

turned and smiled, gave a good natured wave as he pushed off and began to glide over to them.

“Will, I’m surprised to see you here.” He smiled all the same and Will found himself a little jealous of the smile. “Jack let you come? Why are you here?”

Frank grit his teeth, his face darkened. “You promised me! A program Hannibal! A program!”

Hannibal’s smile was disarming, and seemed completely genuine. “Oh Will, I am so sorry. My professional curiosity got the better of me and drew me here.” He turned the smile on Will and he was unsure what to do with it.

“Be that as it may! A promise is a promise Hannibal.” Frank’s anger filled the air and Will was surprised that Hannibal was still smiling pleasantly, back to Frank now. He wasn’t intimidated, he wasn’t upset, he was as cool and charming as usual. Will wasn’t sure if he was envious or caught up in adoration. He shook away the thought. “You *will* choreograph my program Hannibal. Stop with this nonsense, let’s get your things and we can go home to Lithuania!”

Will’s heart raced and he watched Hannibal intently, willing him to refuse, to stay. A week, that was all they’d had. He had so much more to learn from Hannibal... about Hannibal, so much he wanted to show the man. He had wasted this week when they could have been getting to know each other. He bit back his own pleading words as he watched Hannibal’s expression turn to one of consideration before turning a smile on them both.

“Ok, I’ve decided. Tomorrow I will choreograph a program for you both using the same music from my short program.”

“The same moves and music as him?” Frank near yelled, indignantly as he glared at Will.

Will felt several emotions crawling under his skin, unsure of what any of them meant.

“No no.” Hannibal chuckled, ignoring the tone of Frank’s outburst. “The piece has several different arrangements. And I’ll think of a different program for you both of course, suiting each piece.” His smile was charming and Will nodded. He wanted to put his faith into whatever Hannibal decided. He wanted to trust him, but moreover he wanted to keep him in Hasetsu however he could.

“In one week you will compete, we’ll see who can surprise the audience more.” Hannibal challenged.

“Wait.” The word jumped from Will’s mouth. “One week? But I-”

Frank talked over him “- fine! But Hannibal must do as the winner asks.”

Hannibal mulled over the proviso with a smile before giving a curt nod. “Very well.”

Will had a sinking feeling in his gut.

*

Margot and Alana had been overjoyed at the news and threw themselves into organising the event - a face off between William Graham of the USA and William F. Dolarhyde of Lithuania. A battle of Wills! It was going to pull in the crowds, it was going to bring in the revenue everyone in the town needed. The press were instantly going mad for it.

And yet Will couldn't bring himself to like the idea. If he lost, what would Frank ask for? It would no doubt involve taking Hannibal away from him. It was bad enough that they had to share him now. Frank had demanded a room in the hotel, and even though he'd wanted to tell him not to, his dad gave him a fairly nice one with a view across the nearby river.

"If you get Hannibal to yourself the whole time it won't be a fair match!" Frank had snapped at him with his demand.

Hannibal had chuckled and nodded. "He's right Will. It's only fair." There was something in Hannibal's eyes when he looked at Will then. A warmth, not quite reassurance and maybe closer to that teasing of his. Will clenched his jaw- maybe Hannibal thought this was fun. Maybe it was, maybe it should be? Maybe he had lost the joy from skating and that was how he got to this point- back in his hometown, a failure. But this wasn't a joke. In one week he might humiliate himself before his entire town, forget about the television broadcasts. In front of Hannibal who he had somehow inspired.

Hannibal turned the smile on Frank. "Shall we get you settled Will?"

"Why must you always do that? Call me Frank for crying out loud, everyone calls me Frank!" The teenager growled. "Only my grandmother calls me Will."

Hannibal chuckled at that, a sort of fondness in his gaze at the boy.

Of course.

And now they sat together, the three of them, in the diner, Will's mind busy even as he remained silent. Frank had more potential. He was younger, a career ahead of him. He was so many things Will wasn't - confident in his skating, comfortable in front of Hannibal. Will felt the corners of his mouth tug down involuntarily in his sadness. He slipped out quietly as the Lithuanians continued to talk easily over their dinner.

Compared to me, he's much more.

*

Will skated. Glided. No music. Just him and the ice, the connection. He moved his body feely, letting it do what it wanted. Letting his mind clear, letting his anxiety fade. Allowing himself to be himself. To just be.

It wasn't until he took his skates off to go home that Margot told him Hannibal had turned up looking for him. Apparently he'd looked all over when he realised Will had left the hotel, he'd found Bev and she had sent him to the rink. She'd explained that Will skates or does

ballet when he's feeling anxious, when he needed to be free of everything. Will felt a little exposed as Margot relayed the conversation.

"He watched you for a while, we talked about your love of skating, how you chose this over your… well, you never had many friends to choose it over." She gave a warm smile. "He thanked us for helping him know you better."

Hannibal had left before Will had finished his skate.

Will's face had heated with embarrassment to think of Hannibal talking about him in this way. He was never going to be easy and confident with him as Frank was. Hannibal would likely give up trying to be friends at this rate. Despite the feeling of anxiety balling in his stomach once more, Will clenched his jaw- he had to do better. Had to push himself more if he wanted to keep Hannibal.

*

Will tied on his skates and tried not to let his anxiety get the better of him. This was the first practice - he had to be confident. This might well be his last season, he wouldn't make it at all if he let it get the better of him now.

He glanced over at Frank.

I can't lose this… I can't lose Hannibal.

"On Love: Eros and Agape. This is Agape." Hannibal explained as he played the first of the two arrangements for them, echoing around the empty rink.

He looked at Will intently, a deep and gentle warmth in his expression, that Will couldn't quite read. "Have you ever thought about love, romantic love?"

Will felt heat rise in his face and shook his head as he cast his eyes down. Love wasn't something he fully understood, it often felt abstract to him in the same way that Hannibal did - out of reach. Something to be ignored and left undealt with because it meant looking into himself too deeply. He looked back up to catch Hannibal's comforting smile.

"What do you feel when you listen to the music then?"

"It's… innocent. It's like someone who doesn't know what love is yet." Will felt the blush rise further as he said it. He had connected with the music in a way he knew he needed to in order to present a routine and do it justice. Was that how he thought of himself? Perhaps. It wasn't anything he'd really considered before, not before-

"I hate all that innocent crap." Frank huffed with disdain, folding his arms across his chest.

Hannibal grinned slightly at the teen and pressed play again. The second arrangement - Eros - began to play.

Will felt as if the music was pushing into him, trying to flow through him, but he was unsure of it and wouldn't let it in. It was what his mother would have called 'hot and spicy' and

winked at. It was something grown up and restricted. “It’s like a completely different song…” Will thought aloud, muttering the words almost reverently. How could they be so different? Make him feel so different?

“Hannibal.” Frank demanded attention before it had even finished playing. “I want this song.”

Hannibal merely smiled again, speaking as the music continued to play out. “Agape is unconditional love.”

Will though of his parents, of their love, of their hard work. Of the home and business they had built. Yes, Agape was something he knew, he could skate that.

Hannibal continued - “This, Eros, is sexual love.” his gaze flit between them for a moment and Will knew this would go to Frank and he would skate it perfectly. He held back the rising anxiety, he just needed to make sure he skated Agape with everything he had inside him.

“And so, this is how I assign them.” With a grin Hannibal was pointing at him - “Will you skate Eros.” his finger moved, “Frank skates Agape.”

They protested at the same time, talking over each other. Hannibal was still grinning as he calmed them with his hands. “Always do the opposite of what people expect, how else will you surprise them? You both need to be more self aware. You cannot choose your own image, I’m at least surprised that you think you can.” He chuckled lightly. “If you aren’t up to my exacting standards for the event then I won’t choreograph for you.” A sly grin then as he teased - “You’re both my fans, so I’m sure you’ll manage.”

“Fine! If I win Hannibal, you will return with me to Lithuania and you will be my coach, that’s the bargain.” Frank’s eyes narrowed in on Hannibal.

Hannibal’s smile didn’t waver as he nodded his agreement. A knot formed in Will’s gut, it tightened as Hannibal asked gently -

“And you Will, what do you want if you win?”

Will felt sick at the prospect of losing Hannibal, forcing himself instead to think of victory, of the seafood gumbo his parents had always made him to reward his victories. He thought about sharing those victories with those he-

“I want to eat seafood gumbo with you, Hannibal.” Hannibal looked taken aback. Perhaps it was a stupid request? Will straightened himself up and clenched his fists, he had to win - “I want to keep on winning, and keep on eating seafood gumbo! So I’ll do it. I’ll skate Eros with everything I’ve got!”

He wasn’t quite sure what the glint in Hannibal’s eyes was, he just knew he wanted to see it again. And again.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

The battle for Hannibal is on! Welcome to Hot Tubs on Ice!

Chapter Notes

Ok, I'm going to slowly depart from the main focus of Yuri on Ice now. The focus here will still be on Will and Hannibal, but I want to explore a little more with Will so that this isn't just a carbon copy of YOI because that will be just as boring for you to read as it would be for me to write. It's still going to follow the plot - the competitions, getting together, etc, just with a bit more focus on who Will is.

Chapter 4 is finished. Once I've written chapter 5 and gone back to edit 4, I will post that one too. I had hoped to catch up to YOI but the run up to Christmas is busy, so that might not happen. Please stay tuned though :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will stood at the side of the rink next to Francis, who was as simultaneously laid back and surly as usual. At least that's how he appeared. Will was trying to appear just cool and collected, but in fact was near nauseous with how nervous and excited he felt as Hannibal took up position on the ice to show them the programs he had choreographed for them.

He fidgeted with his glasses, dropping his hands to give undivided attention as soon as Hannibal began to speak.

"First, Agape for Wi- Frank." Hannibal grinned as he corrected himself. Frank huffed and Will was sure it was a taunt. They seemed to have an easy camaraderie on some level, maybe from training together. Hannibal certainly treated Frank like a bratty younger brother. Will was sure Frank secretly enjoyed it despite his grumbling. Will wished he could be as easy with Hannibal, like a friend. Be friends-

The music started and Hannibal began to skate. He was beautiful, he flew.

Will's heart went with him at first, drawn into the performance. Then he reminded himself that there was a reason they were here. That these programs had to be replicated. He stole a glance over at Frank who seemed to be concentrating.

Damn, this is a hard routine!

With Hannibal it looked effortless as he moved from turn to turn, he hadn't even started on any jumps yet. Could Frank really do it? Frank had already proved that he was immensely skilled in the technical aspect, but this might even be beyond him - and to capture the feeling too? Hannibal skated with such emotion that Will felt like there was love coming off him in waves and reaching out for the audience. It was touching, it was deep. These were things he would never normally connect with Frank. Could he make the audience feel as deeply as Hannibal would? Every tiny micro expression speaking volumes - could Frank do that?

Hannibal moved to his final position as the music ended. Will was mesmerised despite his best efforts to seem detached from the process.

"Something like that." Hannibal turned a grin on them both as he panted out the words.

"Yeah. I've pretty much got it!" Frank replied.

Will frowned. How could he pick things up this easily? Will was sure he was never that good at fifteen.

"That was amazing!" Alana's voice echoed across the rink as she walked around to join them.

"Who's she?" Frank asked, a slight sneer there.

"Alana, she runs this place." Will smiled as he introduced her.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt. I was at the viewing window and just had to come through… so fantastic." She clapped her hands together.

Will grinned. Alana was a huge fan of Hannibal's - of course she would take every chance to watch the champion skate in person.

Hannibal nodded in thanks and then called out. "Ok Will, now your program."

Will nodded, anxiety returning as he pressed play and the music began.

Sexual. Sensual.

Not Will. How could Hannibal even believe he would be capable of this? He pushed aside the thought. This was something Hannibal had personally choreographed just for him - he must have faith.

Hannibal moved from his first position, turning, looking at them - at him it felt like - a glance that made something stir in Will's chest and in his-

His breath hitched as Hannibal continued and Alana clutched at his arm with a delighted sound.

Oh… there's so much eros in this routine I think it might impregnate me!

Will started to freak out. How was he ever going to skate this? This wasn't him!

Before he knew it, it was over. Hannibal was asking him what he thought but he could do little more than nod and answer - “It was very… eros.” His mind was reeling from thinking he’d never be able to do this to… something else. As Hannibal stood before him and his blood rushed hot through his body, he was thinking-

“So, which quads can you land?” Hannibal asked.

“Uh…” Will’s nerves surged but he pushed through as he told himself he must. “The toe loop… and uh, I can land the Salchow in practice but never in competition.” He nervously scrubbed at the back of his neck as Hannibal smiled gently at him. “But… I can try it, what do you think? I can… I think I can do it if I try.” Will asserted, trying to seem as confident as possible.

Hannibal nodded encouragingly. “Ok, you can start on the basics, I will teach Frank his program first. I won’t waste time trying to teach you anything you can’t do.” The words were painful to hear but there was no malice in Hannibal’s tone, just honesty. Hannibal smiled again before narrowing his eyes on him intently. “How many times have you errored in competition?” He added softly - “You have the skill to win, why haven’t you?”

“Oh… um…” Will felt nervous again, but something else - defensive, salty. He knew he was a failure, he didn’t like to rake over it. “I lack confidence.” Will just stopped short of snapping the words out.

“But not lacking in snark I see.” Hannibal grinned at him and Will felt his face redden. Hannibal continued before he had chance to apologise - “I want to help you find the confidence you need, and embrace it.”

Will nodded to show he was at least open to what Hannibal was trying to do, despite his *snark*. Hannibal grinned again, but then it softened into something else, something-

It made Will nervous and he reached up to adjust the glasses he had already taken off before taking to the ice. Hannibal cocked his head as he raised his hand and took hold of Will’s lowering it down and then letting go of it.

“You don’t need to hide behind your glasses. Don’t hide from me.” The words were rumbled.

Hannibal’s hand came up again but this time a thumb ran over Will’s bottom lip as he moved in closer. His right foot glided between Will’s legs, they were almost touching down the entire length of their lower halves - almost. Hannibal’s thumb stilled at the centre of Will’s lip, as he leaned in close to all but whisper -

“Unleash the eros within you. I know it is smoldering deep within you, waiting for it’s chance to come out. Maybe no one has seen it before, but let me see.” The words were smooth, like liquid gold coating him. Will’s eyes were wide and he was trying not to tremble as he felt Hannibal’s hot breath on him. “Will you let me see you, Will?” Hannibal licked his lips, “soon?”

Will’s heart was beating so fast he could hear the pounding in his ears. What was eros to him? Could he find it for Hannibal? With-

“Hannibal! You said you were teaching me first!” Frank called across the rink and Hannibal glided back away from Will with a smile.

“Think Will, I want to know what eros is to you.” Hannibal’s smile no longer felt quite as intimate, but his eyes were sparkling and Will could see only his absolute beauty.

What eros is to me? What would that be?

*

Will wanted to turn his disappointment to anger, but was unsure who to aim it at, so he turned it instead into frustration and determination.

Hannibal had made him train the basics again all morning because he - “still didn’t have eros.”

He felt a little sorry for Margot who had come into the training room as he was stretching and trying to vent his frustration into his training. He told her what had happened and she looked at him sympathetically. That same sympathetic look he was sure he saw after every loss.

“The annoying thing is I can see… feel… the story in it, in the program - the design.” Will practically snarled out the words. All this pushing, all this stepping from his comfort zone, was turning his nervousness into *snark*, as Hannibal called it. Salty, was what his mum always used to say. Salty like a mean catfish.

“Tell me the story.” Margot commanded, and he smiled a thanks for her putting up with him.

“I can see…” it felt as though a pendulum swung before his eyes and the story became clear. “A playboy comes to town and bewitches all the women, he decides to pursue the most beautiful woman in the town. She’s not interested, but he pursues her with flattery and gifts and promises. Finally she gives in… But, once he gets what he wants he casts her aside, he’s tired of her. And then, well… he goes to the next town.” Will shrugged but smiled, imagination was not something he was lacking.

Margot grinned and clapped her hands together. “I love it! Very hot! But…” her smile faltered and Will knew what was coming next. “That… doesn’t really seem like you though.”

“I know.” Will practically shouted, frustration clear. “People will see it and just wish that Hannibal was skating it.”

Margot frowned and laid a comforting hand on his arm. “Yeah, but in that video, when you skated Hannibal’s program - you looked pretty hot in that. Maybe you could-”

“I can’t copy him.” Will groaned. “How will I ever surpass him if I copy him?”

Margot stared at him for a moment. “You… wait, you seriously think you can be better than him someday?”

“Um, no… I mean…” Will flushed and rubbed at the back of his neck as Margot grinned.

“Will, I love you, but I mean… This is Eros! How can someone as inexperienced in dating as you beat the hottest bachelor in the world?” she gave him a gentle look, more sympathy and Will sighed.

*

“Hmm, something isn’t right here.” Hannibal’s voice was clear across the ice as Will entered the rink. The would-be coach and Frank were finishing up on the ice. Almost his turn to practice. “There’s no sense of Agape, Francis. No unconditional love in your performance. Only your hunger for victory. The audience needs to feel you - are you smiling or frowning?”

“Trust me, I’m smiling.” Frank returned through grit teeth.

Will hoped that disappointed tone was never turned on him, though Frank didn’t seem all that bothered by it. He was glowering angrily at Hannibal - definitely no agape there.

“It’s good to have confidence Frank, but now is not the time to show it off.”

Frank flared up then, blustering as he near roared - “Hannibal! I am the Great Ice Dragon!” Hannibal didn’t react and so Frank snapped - “And… you always showed off!” Still no reaction and so Frank, clearly as frustrated as Will had been feeling shouted. “What is Agape to you then?”

Hannibal’s smile was warm and calm. “It’s an emotion. It cannot be described. It can’t be put into words. When you skate it’s about what you feel not what you think!” He glanced over at Will and Will froze.

Maybe he knew that feeling. He could skate Agape. Hannibal knew that, his sweet smile said so. But what of Eros?

*

The next few days of training were a blur. Will didn’t even have chance to escape - to go fishing at the river, do ballet or even just skate carefree. It had him wound tight and made it so much harder to get through each day.

Damnit! I’m a grown man of 23. I could totally show mature sexiness if I wanted to. Couldn’t I?

Will knew he was overthinking it. But as he soaked in the hot tub with a rather miserable Frank after a long day of training, there was little else to dwell on. Until his thoughts were interrupted by Hannibal’s arrival. He was totally naked. Will felt his heart stop for a moment, unsure of how to process everything his thoughts at the sight. The man was so slender and athletic but muscular and firm. Even though he was no longer a teen, there was a femininity about him that brought something to his skating.

He’s beautiful

Was it admiration? Envy? He wasn’t sure...

It's no good. I'm not even close to finding eros in myself... there's nothing for Hannibal to see.

They were in the diner and supposed to be eating dinner but Hannibal was the only one of them with an appetite. Frank was exhausted and still as bummed over his inability to grasp agape as Will was with eros. Their food sat untouched as they sat mirroring each other's forlorn expressions.

It's what causes you to lose the ability to make rational decisions. What does that to me? What tempts me to act against my better judgement-

"Seafood gumbo!" Will declared in exultation. He was struck with the realisation. "I get it now! Seafood gumbo - that's what eros is to me!" For a brief moment Will grinned at his long awaited success. Yes, that was right. His victory seafood gumbo that he wanted to eat with Hannibal. Yes, that was eros - the gumbo!

"Wait… no…" Will slumped back in his chair, hit with the reality of what he had just said.

Hannibal gave a lopsided smile, comforting. "It's ok Will, let's go with that for now. It's nice and unique."

Will shrank back in his seat, feeling like an idiot, he wanted the ground to swallow him up. At least Frank had perked up, though he was clearly being laughed at by the teen.

Seafood gumbo? Did I say that! I'm more immature than the fifteen year old.

*

Will moved across the ice, from turn to turn as Hannibal had choreographed. The moves were there, the story was there, it was up to him to bring the emotion. To *understand* the emotion and let Hannibal see it.

"More prawn Will." Hannibal called and Will could hear the smile in his voice. Was it encouragement or was he being made fun of? No, he was sure that wasn't the case. When he came off the ice Hannibal gave him a fond smile that made that clear, even if it also conveyed that Will wasn't quite there yet.

He could only take solace in the fact that neither was Frank. Agape still eluded him.

The days seemed to both stretch and blur, he wasn't even sure when the event was anymore. It felt like it should have been weeks ago as they packed more and more into eachday and still made little progress.

After morning practice Hannibal sent them to train some more. Running, dancing, stretching, working out at the gym, skating the basics. Will wasn't sure he had worked so hard in his life and yet he was still getting nowhere. How could he get anywhere if eros was still so elusive to him? He thought he at least knew himself better than that but his mind wasn't as clear anymore, being around-

“The waterfall.” Hannibal told them, and that’s what they did. Standing under the flow of the beautiful waterfall almost under Fort Hasetsu, trying to clear their minds. Trying to find their own elusive forms of love.

Will ached from the force of the water and when he looked over at Frank he was concerned that the teen hurt even more.

“Frank? Are you ok?” He pulled the boy out of the flow and watched as he came back from his reverie. There was a look in his eyes that Will was unsure of. An emotion there that seemed alien on Frank’s face - he suddenly looked so vulnerable.

“I… My grandmother…” Frank started before straightening up and coming back to himself. He huffed and stormed off.

*

Agape. Unconditional love.

Will’s jaw dropped as he watched Frank. It was the morning after the waterfall. Something had happened there, Frank had found something within him, because now he skated Agape - really skated it, the emotion. Will could clearly *see* Frank.

“Looks like Frank found his Agape.” Hannibal muttered approvingly. “Maybe he’s ready for the next stage.

“Next stage?”

Do I have a next stage? Once I perform Eros of the seafood gumbo?

Will wasn’t sure there would be a next stage for him. He wasn’t sure there would be any eros at all. He couldn’t find it. He was missing something.

“Perhaps, costumes will help.” Hannibal smiled.

Case upon case was awaiting them when they returned to the hotel in the late afternoon. Hannibal had had all his previous costumes couriered. Costumes he’d worn from a teenager to the man he was today. There should be something for both of them, certainly something eros, but it would be Hannibal’s eros not Will’s. Any would surely look ridiculous on Will. They would highlight his lack of eros rather than complement it.

Frank pawed through the clothes as Will unpacked them reverently - recognising each and every one. His hands were a little clammy and his heart raced as he held them, imagined Hannibal in them - the beauty he had created on the ice. The feelings Will had felt watching him skate in them. It was all a little overwhelming, but joyous in a way Will hadn’t felt much of since his mother passed.

“This…” Will held one up. The black and silver, feathered like a raven and ethereal. Hannibal had worn it in the Junior World Championship.

“Ah, that one!” Hannibal looked at it fondly. “I had long hair at the time so my costume was designed to suggest both male *and* female genders.”

Will knew - remembered it clearly in his mind. His heart thud once and his breath hitched. He held the costume close to him, feeling like he was close to… something-

“I choose this one.” Will breathed the words. The event was tomorrow. He hadn’t found eros, wasn’t sure he ever would, but something came together in his mind. The story - the design was wrong, it had to change.

*

Will ignored the crowds as he and Frank gave interview after interview to the national and international press that had gathered for the event in his little hometown.

He might not have found eros but he had found some level of confidence. He had worked through the night, trained, redesigned. He knew what had been missing in the story, and now he would skate it and hopefully he might be good enough that people would see eros there, in that design, even if he didn’t have it in his heart.

“Ready?” Hannibal asked as he escaped from the last of his own interviews.

“Of course.” Frank spat the word out, defensive and angry seemed to be his default mode in competition. “You better be ready Hannibal, to give the winner what they requested!”

Hannibal waved it off and smiled. “Yes, of course.”

They moved to the training room and began to warm up as the crowds were finally seated. Last minute stretches and warms up that seemed to end too quickly as Alana entered the room and told Frank he was up. Frank gave a curt nod and shrugged out of his jacket to reveal the costume beneath.

If Will hadn’t known it to have been one of Hannibal’s he would have assumed it was made for Frank - so much did it make him appear as the Great Ice Dragon he was hailed to be. He turned to Will, expression hard - “You owe me awe!”

Dramatic as ever.

Will followed Frank and Hannibal, gripping hold of the barrier rink side, knuckles white with anticipation as Frank took up his first position. He felt strangely conflicted after spending so much time training with the teen, seeing how hard this had been for him too, despite what a little shit he could be. He wanted him to do well, wanted him to show his Agape to the audience… but he also didn’t want to lose Hannibal.

Frank began and Will’s heart sank even as his chest swelled with something like pride. The Great Ice Dragon became as something closer to an angel as he drew in the crowd with the feeling of his performance. He completed every move with precision, skill and emotion.

This is completely different to his skating in practice. The waterfall… something changed.

Frank appeared on the ice to be a beautiful, ever-evolving monster. The crowd was deafening as he brought his routine to a close. Will glanced at Hannibal, he looked breathless - enthralled. After a moment he came back to himself and called out congratulations across the ice to Frank.

“That’s the best performance I’ve seen from you so far!”

That was amazing

It was clear Frank would rank among the top senior division skaters. Will couldn’t help a smile, the boy had earned it. Good for him! But then reality descended again and he remembered that Frank would take Hannibal away if he won.

I don’t want that. I have to win. I want-

His vision swam a little as he looked down at his skates. He pulled himself together, and straightened - and found Hannibal standing directly in front of him. So close as the man smiled in a way that made his breath hitch.

“Ready to be seen, Will?” The words were crooned and Will felt something snap inside. Yes, he had to win.

“I’m… I’m going to become a completely delicious seafood gumbo.” He declared to Hannibal. He clenched his jaw and his fists, determination gripping him. “So… so, please watch me.” He lurched forward and wrapped his arms around his coach. He needed to. He needed the touch, the grounding. The reality. He needed to know the man was there and that he needed to keep him there. “Promise!” He requested with a shaky voice.

“Of course.” Hannibal replied gently. “I love seafood gumbo. And I always keep my promise.”

He could hear the announcers as he made his way to the centre of the ice and took up his first position. The crowd was shouting messages of luck, cheering him on before he even began. He could do this.

At first I didn’t know who I was dancing for. But now I know-

The music began and he let his limbs loosen as his hands flowed down his body, the first turn snapping him back to look directly at Hannibal. Did he imagine the little whistle then? Lips pursed, blown at him almost as one might blow a-

He pushed off into the next set of moves and turns. He had been up all night with Bev looking for eros, trying to find it within himself. He had realised the key to it, what he needed to do to find his next level. Because he wasn’t the playboy who had come to the town.

~I want you to teach me how to move like a woman. I want to be the most beautiful woman in the town, who seduces the playboy~

Another turn, a jump. His lines feminine and soft, his form masculine and defined - both, together. Harmonious.

~No drastic changes to the moves… just… a better expression of how I really feel~

Will felt it now. Gliding into the spread eagle, there had been a change. This was him, and if he was to find eros within himself he had to know himself first, allow himself to. Now he knew…

He lept into the triple axel. He tried not to overthink it, but it was too late. His hand was down, as he stepped out of the quadruple Salchowl. But he moved through it, he was still on his feet. He spurred himself on.

Not enough for me to lose.

I have to let him see the real me.

He moved through the quadruple toe loop, triple toe loop, effortless and full or emotion, of eros. He skated smoothly into his last spin and out into his final pose. As he panted and tried to hold his form against the trembling exhaustion of his body his eyes focused on the barrier and found - Hannibal.

The crowd was cheering but he could barely hear them.

“Will!” Hannibal’s voice cut through the din. He raised his arms in celebration of Will’s performance. Will felt his heart soar the same way it had a million times when he had watched Hannibal skate. He was shaking as he pushed off and skated back to the barrier, shaking all the more when Hannibal wrapped his arms around him. “That was the most delicious seafood gumbo I’ve ever seen.” His voice was rich and the tone affectionately teasing.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Hannibal remains to train Will for the competitive season. As they grow closer Will starts to grow in confidence in who he truly is.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Of course.

Of course Will overslept on his first proper training session with Hannibal now truly invested as his coach. Of course. He cursed under his breath as he ran to the rink.

After the high of his *Hot Tubs on Ice* win, knowing that Hannibal wasn't going anywhere, he had been having trouble sleeping. More so than usual. His mind was too active, thinking up scenarios, analysing every conversation and look. *What's wrong with you Will?!* It shouldn't be this hard to concentrate. Just because he idolised Hannibal, it shouldn't make him this much of a mess. It was ridiculous. *He* was ridiculous!

It's more like having a God around than a coach…

Will apologised the moment he saw Hannibal, he seemed hardly phased by his lateness at all. If anything he seemed amused - said only Jack, his and Frank's coach, had ever kept him waiting like that before. Will felt colour rise across his cheeks. *Ridiculous.*

He took to the ice. It was easier. Soothing. He could clear his mind… usually. But sometimes he couldn't, like now… with Hannibal watching… with Hannibal-

He went down out of a jump, twisted, fell and hit the ice hard.

"I've noticed you tend to miss the mark when you have something on your mind, Will. How do you feel?" Hannibal's voice was smooth. Something there was almost… sensual?

He got up and shook his head, ignored the throb in his shoulder and knew he had to do better, even if Hannibal's smile was still firmly in place.

*

"I wonder if three quads in your free program is too many?"

Hannibal appeared at the side of the hot tub. Will had been soaking so long that he was almost growing gills, but at least the ache in his shoulder had subsided.

Will looked away quickly as Hannibal removed the towel at his waist and climbed in opposite him. “But… If I want to compete in the Grand Prix Final, I have to keep those jumps in!”

“You can get by with just one quad. Just get a perfect score on the program components and you will be fine.” Hannibal smiled. A reassuring thing, but even so it sat uneasy on Will. Was that all the faith Hannibal had in him? Not that he was wrong.

It made sense. It was exactly what Will had always done - make up points in presentation after messing up his technical scores on failed jumps. It had got him this far… But it wasn’t always enough, it wasn’t how he wanted to get by.

Something has to change…

“Will.” Hannibal brought him back from his thoughts as he moved towards him in the tub, water ebbing gently around them. “Do you know why I decided to come here and be your coach?” his smile was soft, his eyes were warm and there was something there that drew Will in, something that he didn’t want to let go of.

And then Hannibal’s hands reached for his where they idled on the surface of the water. He pulled Will up in the tub and across to him, so that he was almost held against Hannibal’s chest - water glistening in the hair there. Will swallowed and was surprised that he didn’t feel the urge to pull away. “I was drawn to you because of the way you move to the music, like the song is already inside you and you are using your body to release it.”

Will’s heart was racing. He understood perfectly what Hannibal meant, he felt it inside himself. Skating had always been a release for him. Skating and ballet, and both together. It wasn’t just the music, it was how he felt, it was his true self. He knew that now, or at least, he had started to understand it. He wanted to explore it...

“You need a high difficulty program to maximise that potential.” Hannibal’s voice was low, and despite neither of them moving he somehow felt closer. Will thought he could feel the heat of the man’s skin so close to his own. He let go of one of Will’s hands and brushed his fingers down Will’s cheek. “I knew I could give you that. The program you need.”

Hannibal’s smile was warm but his eyes were intense. There was something in his posture that suggested he was perfectly comfortable with Will like this, like they had been friends much longer, like they had known each other much better. It was intimidating, and yet… they were so close, and that look… was Hannibal going to lean in and-

Hannibal’s features relaxed into something altogether softer as he released Will and floated gently back to the other side of the tub, continuing to talk about their training moving forward. The moment was lost.

He wanted Will to produce his own free program! Will didn’t know whether to be flattered by Hannibal’s faith in him, or terrified. A measure of both fought within him.

*

“Have you heard of Bedelia du Maurier?” Alana asked, not looking up from her phone as Will sat on one of the locker room benches. She continued before he had chance to reply - “she’s Jack’s ex-wife and he’s brought her into help with Frank’s training but she just yells at him constantly.” Alana seemed amused if puzzled.

“Huh.” Will smiled. “That doesn’t sound like fun.” Frank was someone who had either had too much or not enough of a domineering female influence in his life. Will wasn't sure which.

He knew the name, knew enough about professional ballet to recognise it. An interesting move, he could imagine Frank would benefit from it. From the feminine lines and grace that would only enhance his program.

Perhaps that’s what drew me to ballet…

Will wasn’t surprised that Frank’s loss in Hasetsu had lit a fire under him. Apparently Alana saw him leave before the results were even announced. She tried to stop him but he said there was no point after Will’s performance - he was going back to his coach, Jack. “Don’t get me wrong, I’m going to win the grand prix final. Tell Will that!” she had repeated to him, though had probably not said it with as much venom as Frank.

He was actually sort of happy for the kid. He wished he’d had the same talent and drive, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t planning on beating Frank!

“So, have you decided on the music for your free program?” Alana looked at him eagerly as she pocketed her phone.

He sighed. “There was… I had music made before and it...well it was meant to be a reflection of me, of my skating.”

“That sounds great… you don’t sound so enthused?”

“It was too good a reflection of my skating, which at the time was… it wasn’t good enough.”

“The music or the skating?”

“Both.” He sighed again. “I had Hannibal listen to it, but I already knew what he confirmed - it wasn’t right. It isn’t good enough.”

An underwhelming piece for an underwhelming skater.

Will’s head ached just thinking about it. He finished lacing his shoes and grabbed his bag. Running it all over in his mind as he walked home. He’d always let his coach choose his music before. Not Hannibal… no, Hannibal had always had music created just for the story he wanted to tell - for his design. Maybe...

He pulled out his phone and looked up Peter. His best friend from college, an amazing skater in his own right - Peter Bernardone. He checked the time, before hitting call.

“Hey Peter… how are-”

“Hey Will!” Peter’s tone was enthusiastic and it made Will smile.

“So you’re back home training now?” Will found himself smiling just talking with his friend. Someone who he had enjoyed spending time with, had something in common with. But more than that, there was never any pressure there. Peter didn’t judge anyone, didn’t care who they were - he just gave his friendship freely. He was the only close friend Will had ever had, until-

“Yeah, well. Baltimore wasn’t the same after you left.” Will heard the mixture of emotion in the tone - it was a jest, but it was also true.

Will huffed a light laugh. “Yeah. Hey look, Peter, I have a favour to ask. Do you remember the student that made my demo music for me? I… I need her to do it over. I lost touch after… I felt bad that I never used her music.”

“I understand. I think I know someone who knows her, I can try and track her down.”

“That would be great!” Will felt like a weight had lifted. His skating was better now, if the music matched it would be fantastic.

*

“You still haven’t chosen the music?” there was no admonishment there, only surprise. Understandably - this sort of thing must have come so easy to Hannibal. He was so sure of himself, of who he was, what he was on the ice - finding music to match would have been child’s play to him. Will was still searching, whilst also hoping that Peter came through with his connections.

Will held the rink barrier as he warmed up, Hannibal stood appraising him, thoughtfully.

“Trust your intuition. Find something that inspires you. It could even be a memory.” Hannibal’s smile became a grin. “Perhaps when a girl said she loved you.”

“What?” He snapped the word out with indignation as he stood from his squat and faced Hannibal - meeting his smile with an angry glare. Surely Hannibal knew? Didn’t he know? Was he teasing? Will felt deflated. He let out a sigh. “Sorry, that was rude of me. I-”

“No, please, it’s my fault.” The grin softened back to a smile. “I forgot you’ve never had a lover.”

Will felt something inside pull to almost breaking point and then snap back. He clenched his jaw in part to stop saying something he might regret put also to hold back the tumult of emotions he didn’t want Hannibal to see. He turned and pushed off into the quiet peace of the ice.

*

Will was exhausted. From training. From being around Hannibal. From avoiding Hannibal. He was exhausted by his constant avoidance, but outside of training he couldn’t face the man.

Why did he even care so much about Hannibal's assumption? It was only natural someone would assume he, a boy, liked girls.

He lay in bed. He didn't look at his clock to know he was already more than late. Hannibal would be waiting at the rink. Maybe he would come find him sooner or later and yell at him, maybe even go back to Lithuania. Well, if Will wasn't going to put the effort into training, why should Hannibal stay? He wanted to shake this off, he wanted to go and train and have everything how it had been, but Hannibal's assumption had hurt.

Why had it hurt so much?

Will closed his eyes and bit back a sob that almost masked the light tap on his door before it swung open.

"Will, I don't think we should train today. Let's go fishing." Hannibal's words were soft and comforting where Will thought he'd find anger and rejection.

His heart thumped a beat out of time for just a moment before he managed a nod.

*

The river was smooth, the surface hiding the fast undercurrent that pulled at his line. Fishing was something he had done with his father a lot as a child. Before his mum died. Being a single parent and running a business meant there was never any time after that.

Hannibal stood next to him, a wistful look as he watched his own line being dragged by the water. He didn't look at Will, in fact he seemed very far away, when he said - "This reminds me of my childhood. Where I grew up there was a stream on our estate… I never fished, but in the winter it would freeze and I would skate. Every time I see a river like it I am reminded of months of eager waiting. It is… strangely comforting." He did look at Will then, something in his eyes that Will couldn't quite read. "Have you ever felt like that before?"

Will's breath hitched. He had gotten to know Hannibal pretty well as a person, as someone in the here and now. But nothing beyond that until now.

"I… Back in Baltimore there was a girl. Molly, she was… pushy. Always talking to me, asking me how I was doing." Will found the words tumbling out. He'd never said any of this to anyone before. "One day a friend of mine had an accident, I was worried… I mean, really worried and Molly was in the hospital waiting room with me. She… she tried to hug me, to comfort me. I pushed her away."

Hannibal frowned for a brief moment. "Why would you do that?"

"It was a reflex. I felt like she was… trying to say I was weak. She was… she was intruding on feelings she didn't have a right to. I thought of everyone back home - my parents, Bev, Alana and Margot. None of them ever treated me as weak." And yet, he knew, somewhere deep down he had expected them to. Had really suspected that Molly had seen something in him that she perceived as weak. As feminine. That was it, wasn't it?

The realisation stung.

“You aren’t weak, Will. Nobody who knows you would ever think that.” The reassurance there was warm and deep, and Will was grateful for it. “Will, can you tell me… what is it you want me to be to you? A father figure? A brother? Just a friend?”

Will shook his head reflexively. He didn’t want any of those things. He wanted-

“So, your lover then?” There was no note of teasing, just a softness. Maybe a little amusement, but not at Will’s expense. Even so-

“No!” Will was shocked by his own immediate reaction. That wasn’t what this was about? This wasn’t… he wanted more. So much more. He didn’t want a lover he wanted- “I… I just want you to be who you are. I look up to you, I always have. I was afraid to let you see…” *the real me.* Will sighed. “I just… I was avoiding you because I was afraid you’d be… I’ll make it up to you by skating my best.”

Hannibal’s lips quirked into a lopsided smile. “You have a deal. But I won’t let you off easy - that’s my way of showing my love.”

Focus was pulled immediately as something tugged at Hannibal’s line - he had his first catch.

When I open up, he meets me halfway.

I think it’s time to open up more...

*

Something had clicked inside. Fit together and made sense and started to germinate and grow within him.

And Peter found the girl, and the music was redone - she’d sent him a sample and was having the full version recorded as soon as a studio slot opened up.

And the music... it was him. When he listened to it, it was him. A self he had never fully known until Hannibal had come to Hasetsu. A self he had tried to ignore or else had just not fully considered. But now it really clicked and Will felt a mixture of excitement and terror, apprehension and joy.

He was running high on those feelings when he met Hannibal at the rink with the music sample and demanded he show him all his jumps - teach him everything he could do. That energy was still coursing through him hours later when he asked Hannibal to show him the last quad again, only to find his new coach slumped against the rink barrier, panting and grinning.

Sweat had Hannibal’s hair hanging loose and ruffled. His clothes clung to his clammy skin. Will took in the sight. Hannibal was so-

“We’ve done it ten thousand times already.” Hannibal continued to pant through his amusement. “I’ve thought this for a while, your stamina is pretty impressive.” Hannibal

leaned forward to adjust his skate, hair falling forward into his eyes as he looked down. “You have that going for you at least. You’re younger than me, you’ve had no major injuries, you-”

Hannibal stopped dead at the same moment Will realised what he had done and snatched his hand back. He hadn’t meant to. He wasn’t even sure he had been listening to Hannibal, he’d become so focused on his beauty - so unguarded and natural. Something that was beneath each of his performances. Maybe it was idolisation, maybe it was-

He’d reached forward and brushed Hannibal’s hair away from his eyes.

“I just… I’m sorry, I couldn’t help it!” Will apologised hurriedly as Hannibal self consciously pushed back his hair. Will had never seen him look so vulnerable.

“I’m never sure of the length… long is good, short is good, but in between as it grows… I need a haircut.” Hannibal sounded thoughtful but also unsure of himself.

“No, no it’s… it’s perfect. You’re… you’re beautiful!”

They looked at each other for a long moment.

*

“Hannibal!” Will hadn’t even tried to stop himself from barging into the honeymoon suite that was Hannibal’s current home from home. The full music had arrived and it was even better than the sample she had sent. It filled Will with joy and there was no one else he would rather share that joy with than-

“Hannibal, It’s here! The music for the free program.”

He climbed onto the unoccupied side of the bed, alongside Winston, before pressing play on the laptop he’d brought with him. He watched with delight as Hannibal’s face changed as he listened to the music - emotions causing ripples of microexpressions - until finally it ended with Hannibal smiling at him.

“It’s beautiful Will… it’s you.”

I thought I was alone in this. But then Hannibal came, and I don’t feel that way anymore. Some things have changed and some things have stayed the same - but everything feels so new. For the first time I can remember, I can clearly see what’s in front of me. Who I am.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Skating in the nationals Will becomes the subject of hero worship and it teaches him a valuable lesson.

Chapter Notes

Probably time I started including this just for anyone losing track of new characters coming in-will update each chapter with new peeps:

Yuri Katsuki: Will Graham
Victor Nikiforov: Hannibal Lecter
Yuri Plisetsky: Francis Dolarhyde
Toshiya Katsuki: OC (Will's dad)
Minako Okukawa: Bev Katz
Takeshi Nishigōri: Margot Verger-Bloom
Yuko Nishigōri: Alana Verger-Bloom
Axel Nishigōri/Lutz Nishigōri/Loop Nishigōri: Morgan Verger-Bloom
Yakov Feltsman: Jack Crawford
Lilia Baranovskaya: Bedelia du Maurier
Kolya Plisetsky: Francis' grandmother
Phichit Chulanont: Peter Bernardone
Kenjirō Minami: Brian Zeller

NB: I won't be including all Hannibal or YOI characters.

"Will Graham, you're up first!"

The lots were chosen and Will felt the tight grip of anxiety in his gut.

No! Anything but first.

He was sitting with the other three competitors, of which he was the oldest by some years, and trying to keep his composure. The Grand Prix Final hopefuls had all been assigned their competitions now - Will was heading for the Cup of China, then the Rostelecom Cup. But first he had to compete in local qualifying nationals to work his way up. It would be good practice, a chance to explore the possibilities he now saw ahead of him. Grow his confidence.

And yet, he couldn't help but still feel anxious. It was overwhelming - it always had been - that's why his confidence had always failed him before.

And now he had Hannibal. But what if the audience hated him? Blamed him for stealing Hannibal away from skating? They'd surely much prefer to see Hannibal returning than watch Will fail miserably again. And now he was up first and that was the worst-

His thoughts were interrupted by the youngest of the other competitors. Excitable despite trying to play it cool. Will wasn't sure what to make of him.

"I can't believe I get to share the ice with you again this year!" the kid seemed genuinely awed and Will felt heat rise up his face, he had no idea who this skater was, and unfortunately that seemed apparent.

"You don't… you don't remember me?" The kid seemed crushed and Will felt terrible.

"Fourth - Brian Zeller" The announcer drew the lot and the kid perked up.

"Cool! Looks like I'm skating last!" That seemed to return some joy to the kid.

Will smiled politely.

*

Hannibal told him to concentrate on scoring a personal best. No pressure. Take it easy. But last year he'd bombed, the confidence still wasn't there even if Hannibal had faith in him.

I haven't been in a single competition since last year. I've been training with Hannibal for a while now, but I'm still not that sure of myself.

Last year he hadn't been in shape, at least that was something he could try and make sure wasn't a problem this year. He needed to not go off the rails like that again. He needed to concentrate - keep his focus. Ignore the other skaters, just work on himself.

It was easier said than done when he felt like he was being constantly watched. He turned and saw that, again, Zeller was looking at him. Studying him almost, an unguarded look of admiration on his face that made Will a little uncomfortable. *Why would anyone stare at me like that?*

Will looked away and wondered if he should say something or just try to avoid the other skaters even harder than he already was. But then Hannibal arrived, and Will knew his stare mirrored that of Zeller's in that moment. He shook it off and went over.

"You're wearing a suit!" He stated the obvious as he tried to ignore his racing pulse. He was sure he'd never seen Hannibal in a full three piece suit before, because it would certainly have stuck in his memory!

"It's my debut as a coach, I thought I should dress for the occasion." Hannibal crooned out the words, having to speak up over the crowds moving to their seats who clearly thought Hannibal had made the right clothing decision. Will couldn't disagree. His face reddened.

Even so, it made Will more nervous. Hannibal stood out, he had been the best looking skater in competition before becoming Will's coach, people loved him. And now they would see him looking so beautiful and they'd definitely blame Will for him wasting his career when he could've had at least one more season on the ice.

They made their way to rinkside. Will was silent, any confidence he'd had was waning.

"As your coach it's my job to send you out there feeling confident." Hannibal began, seeing Will's poorly hidden expression and smiling at him reassuringly. "I know it's been tough but-"

Will turned away and started toward the ice, the announcer was calling the skaters to warm up and then it would be his skate. There was nothing Hannibal could say to make him feel better. He just had to do it, come what may.

I can't get nervous now. Focus!

He did a lap, tried to loosen himself up. He had to tap into that feeling inside - the inner self he had found before. He had to repeat *Hot Tubs on Ice*. No, he had to surpass it.

When the announcer called the end of the warm up he headed back to the rink side and saw Hannibal looked less than happy. Maybe he was mad that Will had skated off when he was talking? He had been learning in the last few weeks that not only was Hannibal not too fond of rude behaviour, but that Will was a lot ruder than he even realised.

"Will. Turn around." Hannibal told him.

Will raised an eyebrow, confused. "What?-"

"I said turn around." The firm tone made Will's breath hitch and his skin tingle, but he did as he was told, turning to face the ice. His stage. He had to do his best-

All thoughts imploded in his mind as he felt Hannibal's arms come around him and pull him back against his chest - only separated by the rink-side barrier. Will couldn't move, couldn't breathe. Physical contact wasn't something he always handled well - so unsure of himself. If he'd seen him coming he might have moved away. Maybe that was why Hannibal had him turn, maybe he knew he wouldn't have allowed the embrace, even if he wanted to… and didn't he want-

"Seduce me, Will." The words were purred against his ear. "If you can enthrall me, then you can bring this entire audience to it's knees." He felt Hannibal's hot breath on his neck, and knew that Hannibal could feel him shaking. "You can do this." He gave Will a little squeeze before letting him go.

He could do this.

Will skated to his first position and waited for the music to start - Eros.

You are the femme fatale - you can do this

He shared a look with Hannibal. He knew Hannibal could really *see* him. He wanted that. He needed it.

He pushed off and into the first set of moves, graceful and poised. This was a seduction. He was a mouth watering seafood gumbo no man could resist.

Spread eagle into a triple axel. Quadruple Salchow. Combination…

He moved through them all, only one over rotation and then into the final position - buzzing and panting. The roar of the audience filled his ears but was then cut through with a single cheer -

“That was awesome Will!” Zeller?

Will made his way off the ice, greeted by Hannibal’s smile. It was soft thing, softer than it should be, he was sure. Perhaps Hannibal realised because then he began listing the things that had let Will down that they would need to work on for next time.

The scores came in. First place, and a score among the top ten in the world!

Will grabbed the barrier so that he didn’t stumble with the news and then Hannibal was at his side. A hand on his. They were stood so close but not touching, close enough that Will knew he could lean into the man if he needed his support.

Everything moved around them as the next skater prepared to take to the ice. It felt like nothing could touch them if they just stood there, together.

*

When they finally moved off from rinkside the press was waiting and they gave interviews. It wasn’t a side of skating professionally that Will enjoyed, but it seemed so much easier with Hannibal next to him than it had with his previous coach.

As they wrapped up he heard an excited voice behind him.

“I nailed it! That triple axel. Did you see the score!! I nailed it.”

Will and Hannibal turned to see what the commotion was and saw young Brian Zeller exiting rinkside and heading towards them. He saw Will then and rushed forward excitedly.

“Did you see? It was my best performance yet!”

“I… I was being interviewed. I missed it. Sorry...” Will explained. He wasn’t sure what this kid wanted from him, he wasn’t good with people. But according to Bev, that wasn’t acceptable if you were a public figure, even someone as low down the pecking order as he was.

Zeller was visibly upset. “I… But, I even had a costume made. It's similar to yours from the-”

The kid unzipped his jacket and revealed a costume like one of Will's earlier programs. He felt colour rise in his cheeks. That program had been terrible, he hated being reminded of his past failures.

"Oh god!" Will knew his face was visibly red. "Not something from that awful program?!"

Zeller gasped. "An amazing skater like you doesn't have awful programs! If you make fun of yourself then you're also making fun of me for looking up to you all this time!" The words were shaky with emotion and Will was taken aback. "You better bring your best tomorrow, because I will be!"

And in that moment Will realised that he did know Brian Zeller - he had won this same competition last year, after Will had completely bottomed out. Surely the kid couldn't think of skating up against him in the same way he had always dreamed of skating up against Hannibal? Will Graham was no Hannibal Lecter.

Will's face continued to burn as the kid turned and stomped off.

*

The next day in the changing room Will felt tense. Hannibal had decided he should lower the jump difficulty in the program and focus on performance scores. He could build it up as he progresses to the Grand Prix Final. But… that wasn't what Will wanted.

He wanted to be good enough already. Strangely, he knew he had it within him, if only he could tap into it. If he could be-

A familiar voice caught his attention and he looked up. Brian Zeller was telling the other skaters how he was going to do two quads despite having never landed one in practice. Even that kid was pushing for more.

Will sighed and finished lacing his boots. As soon as he was ready he moved through to rinkside.

I can't get distracted. I need to focus on myself right now.

He saw Zeller come out, ignored the boy as his eyes followed Will as they passed each other. He thought he heard a deflated sigh when they passed without acknowledgment.

When he reached Hannibal the man's look was stern. The sort of look he got when he did something Hannibal considered rude.

"Will, how do you expect to motivate yourself when you are unable to find the strength to motivate someone who looks up to you?" The words were softly spoken but held a reprimand. "I'm disappointed in you." Hannibal turned and walked away with a sigh.

Will swallowed the lump in his throat and looked out over the ice as Brian Zeller was announced. He looked nervous and Will felt the weight of more than just Hannibal's disappointment.

He was about to walk away but then-

Will might not be Hannibal, and he might never have a clue why Brian Zeller looked up to him in that way, but he suddenly realised how it would have felt if he'd had Hannibal's support sooner. How different his life would have been, how he might have learned more about himself and been more comfortable with himself sooner had the right person been there to support him. To nurture his growth. If Hannibal Lecter - following long hair and half skirted costumes - had-

"Hey Brian." Will yelled, leaning over the barrier. "Good luck!"

He saw Zeller smile and centre himself. And then the music started. He was good, a little inconsistent, it reminded Will of the skater he used to be. But with a bit more focus Zeller would go far.

*

Will went to the locker room. Stretched. Centred. Focused.

When he returned to rinkside for his skate, he was determined.

Hannibal smiled at him and took his jacket. The man let out a long sigh. "This costume was the right choice." He leaned in closer to Will. "You look stunning."

Despite the focus, Will felt the words move through him like a tremor.

He had taken time choosing the outfit. He knew needed something that didn't just complement the music and program, but that spoke of who he was - let people see him. Despite being styled as a suit, it had a feminine cut to it, and was finished with a corset that accented his almost feminine figure. It felt like him, he felt strong in it. He felt right.

Hannibal was still standing so close. He drew out some lip balm and thumbed some over Will's lips as though applying makeup. There was something in that. A gesture. Support. Will smiled and Hannibal snaked a hand up around the back of his neck and pulled them together so their foreheads almost touched.

"You're beautiful." Hannibal murmured before releasing him as his name was announced.

Will took a breath and then took to the ice.

The music, this program, he had named it 'Will On Ice'. It truly did represent him, his career so far. What he felt on the ice, the freedom to be who he was even if he had only recently started to explore what that really meant.

He had focus, he felt strong. He couldn't let himself down. He was going to attempt a higher difficulty than agreed. He had to push himself. And he did, on and on along the ice.

But then he stepped out the Salchow landing. It was fine, he maintained focus, he didn't go down. He could correct it. He carried on skating. He had to shake it off - he was going to do

the three quads! He wasn't nailing all his jumps but the audience was reacting, they were loving it, loving him. They could *see* him.

Focus faltered for a moment and he stumbled out of a jump. Too close to the barrier, there was a crack as his face collided with the hard surface. A jolt of pain through his skull.

He had to keep going, he hadn't gone down despite the collision.

He carried on.

He skated through the final moves, his step sequence and into his end position, held his pose despite feeling the blood trickling from his nose, the throb in his head.

The crowd was cheering, but it was Hannibal's reaction he sought. He'd gone against Hannibal's instructions.

He was met with a stern look, a thoughtful look. Perhaps Hannibal was devising some sort of punishment - more gruelling training? But then his expression softened and he smiled at Will. Will felt his heart thud into his throat.

It was all a blur.

I actually had fun skating in a competition. I don't think that's ever happened before.

*

Will had to change into a suit for the press conference - the plaid shirt was the best he owned even if it wasn't quite as smart as everyone else. He had won, he was advancing and he had to announce the theme of his season.

It had taken a while to consider. There were so many thoughts and feelings jumbled inside him. Every day felt like a new discovery, of the world, of Hannibal. Of himself. He knew he couldn't have started this journey without Hannibal and he knew he needed Hannibal beside him for as long as he would stay.

"I struggled to find a theme for this Grand Prix. It was hard, but I chose… I choose love. I've had so many people supporting me in my competitive skating career but I never thought of it as love until now. In the past I've had a hard time accepting that support, I thought I was fighting alone. But ever since Hannibal came into my life I've started to see things differently. Thanks to Hannibal, thanks to love, I've started to see myself, to really see myself. And I want you all to see me too!"

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Hannibal gets drunk. Will gets more confused. And what the hell is love anyway?

Chapter Notes

Updated with new peeps:

Yuri Katsuki: Will Graham
Victor Nikiforov: Hannibal Lecter
Yuri Plisetsky: Francis Dolarhyde
Toshiya Katsuki: OC (Will's dad)
Minako Okukawa: Bev Katz
Takeshi Nishigōri: Margot Verger-Bloom
Yuko Nishigōri: Alana Verger-Bloom
Axel Nishigōri/Lutz Nishigōri/Loop Nishigōri: Morgan Verger-Bloom
Yakov Feltsman: Jack Crawford
Lilia Baranovskaya: Bedelia du Maurier
Kolya Plisetsky: Francis' grandmother
Phichit Chulanont: Peter Bernardone
Kenjirō Minami: Brian Zeller
Christophe Giacometti: Frederick Chilton

NB: I won't be including all Hannibal or YOI characters.

The power of love?

Will had the distinct feeling he was being made fun of by the press, but then when they arrived for the press interviews at The China Cup and it was being said out loud with excitement and joy, not with the sarcasm he had read into the printed press. The press were loving it and Will was starting to understand why, as Hannibal took a seat next to him and then shifted so that they sat so closely their thighs touched - camera flashes exploded around them for a few seconds.

The power of love.

"Will, what is love to you?" one of the press called out.

“Oh, uh.” He scrubbed the back of his neck and felt Hannibal’s hand rest on his thigh under the table, giving a reassuring squeeze. He tried not to jump at the sudden contact. “Love… it’s uh… It’s really… powerful.”

He thought he knew.

When he’d announced his theme he had thought of Hannibal, of the love and trust and acceptance that came with truly being seen by someone. Hannibal would touch him sometimes, as now, but as they continued to train and Hannibal encouraged that feminine side of him in the rink there was little else. Sometimes Hannibal would look at him and they would be so close that Will thought that finally, that they might-

“Will, what is it you want people to see in you?”

The question made colour rise in his cheeks. He’d gotten carried away at the announcement, and although he meant it when he’d said he wanted to be seen, he might not have said it if he hadn’t still been riding high on his win. On how skating made him feel. On how Hannibal-

Hannibal must have felt him shaking, he squeezed his thigh again. Will’s throat dried. He wasn’t ready to articulate it.

“His beauty.” Hannibal answered for him. Camera flashes went off around them again as Hannibal smiled, his hand moving from Will’s thigh to around his shoulders and pulling him closer for the photographers.

*

Will tried to focus on staying positive. Hannibal was his coach, he could win. He remembered before he left the nationals, Zeller grabbed him - agitated with excitement - and told him he would never give up because he wanted to face Will in the Grand Prix Series someday.

He still didn’t get it, he was no Hannibal Lecter, but it had to at least serve as a driving force - there were so many people he didn’t want to let down like last year.

Hannibal must have seen the look on his face, he smiled and took hold of Will’s hand in both of his. They were waiting for the elevator in the hotel up to their rooms.

“Let’s go get dinner. Another coach recommended the hot pot place along the street. Apparently the wine there is very good.” Hannibal squeezed his hands before dropping them, though a grin remained in place.

“I don’t think I should drink before competition.” Will chuckled.

“More for me.” Hannibal leaned in to say the words and for a moment Will thought-

Hannibal wrapped a friendly arm around his shoulder and guided him away from the lobby elevators and out to the street.

The food was excellent, and Hannibal was certainly enjoying the warmed rice wine. They talked about practice, about the food, about nothing in particular. Why did it feel like things had moved backwards with Hannibal? Perhaps he had imagined it all, but for a while he thought Hannibal was-

“Interested?” Hannibal offered up a plate with a grin, moving it temptingly in front of Will’s face.

“No… no, thanks. I can’t eat raw shellfish before a competition.” Will sighed, a shame he wouldn’t get to compare the seafood here to the stuff back home. If only that was all that was getting him down.

“What is it Will? The press conference?” Hannibal’s smile was gentle and concerned.

Will took in a breath. “I guess so. I… I was so eager before but now I’m a little… I’m nervous about it all. I’m just… I’m just glad I have you here with me.” Will forced a small smile and slipped his hand over Hannibal’s.

Hannibal returned the smile but then removed his hand, loosening his tie. “Is it this wine or is it getting a little warm in here?” He chuckled and took off his tie, putting it on the table before he undid the first two buttons of his shirt.

Will had seen Hannibal naked - not that he was able to process it at the time - but strangely seeing him like this felt somehow indecent.

“Hannibal, can I ask you a question?”

A smile and a nod.

“What is love to you?” He wanted to know, desperately. But then as Hannibal hesitated he felt suddenly unnerved. “I mean… what I mean is, the theme. My theme. What do you think of it?”

Hannibal seemed to sigh, was it relief?

“I think it is perfect. Eros will serve you well, and your free program-”

“Ok, thanks.” Will forced another smile and ate a shrimp. He shouldn’t but he did. He might eat all the shrimps.

The thing with a hot pot is that it lasts as long as you keep putting food in the pot. And as the food kept cooking, Hannibal kept drinking. Will wouldn’t have said he was completely shitfaced, like he’d seen Bev once or twice, but he was certainly far from sober. He wasn’t entirely sure Hannibal realised it had been sneaking up on him until he swayed to the bathroom and back.

In the few minutes alone Will wondered if now might be his only chance to work out what was going on with Hannibal. With him and-

“Hannibal, are we friends?”

“Sure, Will.” Hannibal grinned at him over a raised cup of Huangjiu.

“Is… is that all?” Will bit his lower lip and felt a lump rise in his throat at the prospect of a negative answer.

Hannibal sighed, his shoulder slumped as though this was something he’d been avoiding.

“Will… I…”

“It’s ok.” Will forced a smile. This was so not the right time to have asked this. He had to compete tomorrow. He placed his napkin on the table and got up. “I think I'm going to get to bed-”

He was just walking around the booth when Hannibal grabbed him and pulled him into his side of the booth. He held his breath, eyes wide with shock as Hannibal’s arms captured his waist.

“Will… I… We are friends. We are… You are… You’re going through so much. The skating season, how you feel about… you’re still getting to know yourself and you need a friend, and I want to be that friend. I do. I want to be the support you need.” He sighed again and his breath was hot on Will’s cheek. “Whatever this is, it might be just because you need someone, and I… I don’t want to do that to either of us. You need the space to grow be yourself without relying on someone else…”

Hannibal’s words trailed off as he studied Will’s face. Will felt like his whole body was aching, worse than after any skate.

“I… I know who I am Hannibal. It has taken me time, and some of it is thanks to you.” Will spoke quietly. “I am Will Graham, but sometimes I don’t feel like… when I skate… I… feel feminine, I want to feel feminine. Not all of the time, and at first skating was the only way I could express that. But you’ve helped give me the confidence to admit it, and to embrace this… You have supported me, but that… my feelings for you, they are…”

His hands rested on the top of Hannibal’s arms and he had the urge to snake them up and around the his neck. But he couldn’t move - he was transfixed by Hannibal’s gaze. It felt like the man was truly seeing him. Hannibal let out another soft sigh, resignation it seemed, and leaned in towards Will. Will closed his eyes and-

“Will! Hannibal, how are you?”

Under any other circumstances Will would have been more than happy and excited to see Peter Bernardone. Not this time.

Hannibal’s arms immediately loosened and Will felt for a moment like he might fall, but turned and leaned into the table. Bereft.

“Can I join you? So cool I ran into you!”

*

Will woke with a headache and he hadn't even had anything to drink. His phone kept buzzing on the bedside table and there was light coming in through a gap in the curtains. *Shit, am I late?* He sat up and grabbed his phone, expecting messages from Hannibal or maybe even Peter - telling him to get his ass in gear.

But the time was just after 7am, he had plenty of time. The phone buzzing had been…

He opened his Instagram to see he'd been tagged in a picture Peter had taken the night before. A couple of other skaters had joined them and Hannibal had continued to drink and complain of the heat whilst keeping a hand on Will's thigh under the table. It was all bad enough, confusing enough, before Hannibal declared he was too hot and removed his shirt and progressively became more tactile.

Peter had posted a photo of drunken, practically naked Hannibal trying to hug Will. It must have been right before Will excused himself, saying he needed the rest. It was all just too much.

This makes it look like I was screwing around before the big competition! If I mess this up I'll be a joke!

And what did Hannibal look like? What did it look like they were doing? How was he ever going to work out what was going on if they became no more than gossip? Will groaned and fell back into the bed. He was going to kill Peter!

*

When he finally got up, showered, and made his way down to the arena locker rooms, it was clear that Peter's photo had been seen by everyone. Will felt like his face might melt so hot it was burning from the knowing looks and the occasional winks.

That was bad enough but as Will reached the locker room he felt a hand smooth over his ass and then a body press up to him.

"Will, why didn't you invite me to the party?" A teasing tone and seductive look from Frederick Chilton - though he missed the mark slightly with both and came off a little more creepy than he probably intended.

"It was just hot pot." Will growled, more pissed off than ever about the whole thing.

Chilton's smile was another failed attempt at charming though his words had a tinge of jealousy to them - "You're in better shape than last year, Hannibal must be putting you through some very thorough training, hmm?"

"I-" Will clenched his jaw and felt anger rising but was interrupted before he could say anything.

"Frederick, how are you?" Hannibal looked completely fine. He did not look for one moment like he had been out drinking for hours last night. What he did look was bemused. There was

the slightest expression and subtle hint to his voice that Will picked up on but was sure Fred had not - that said Hannibal did not really care if he heard the answer to his question.

“Oh Hannibal.” Dramatic exasperation, as Chilton released Will. “I have no motivation with you gone. I can’t get serious without you to skate against.”

Hannibal’s lips tweaked for a moment, a smile that was nearly something else. His reply was amused - “We are hardly comparable Frederick.”

It was lost to the noise of the locker room as more people came in and crowded them, Will wasn’t even sure Fred heard him. Hannibal moved off, drawn into *hellos* and *we miss yous* from several skaters.

“What you will be remembered for Will.” Chilton’s tone was patronising rather than venomous, “is stealing the beloved Hannibal Lecter away from his fans.”

The words cut through Will as the crowd continued to move around him.

*

Will watched Peter skate. It was amazing. Maybe his own experiences last year had blinded him to the talents of his fellow skaters, or maybe everyone was just stepping up their game this year. Perhaps Hannibal not skating had the others thinking that they could win rather than having to settle for second and third any time they skated in the same competition as him. No fear of that skating against Will.

But the audience still wanted Hannibal, that was for sure. The likes of Fred Chilton too. And one thing was certain - they would not be satisfied with Will skating as a substitute.

I need to prove that I deserve him!

He hadn’t spoken to Hannibal all day. He had been training, preparing and ignoring. He didn’t want to have to deal with anything right now. And yet, Hannibal was there the whole time. As his coach, of course. Watching over him. Watching him.

When it was finally Will’s turn to take to the ice, out of habit he turned to Hannibal the other side of the barrier for last minute coaching.

Hannibal smiled, warm and soft and slipped his hand over the top of Will’s resting on the barrier.

“Will, the time to seduce me picturing seafood gumbo is over.” his words were gently teasing. “At this point you can do it by being yourself. You do know that don’t you?”

There was something deep behind those maroon eyes and it made Will’s breath catch in his throat. If Peter hadn't turned up the previous night might have been different. Perhaps Hannibal understood that Will wasn't just reaching out for support from just anyone. That there was a real connection there. They looked at each other a long moment before Will laced his fingers into Hannibal’s and leaned forward, bringing their foreheads together -

“Watch me Hannibal, don’t take your eyes off me.” He was sure the shiver that went through him went through Hannibal too. He swallowed thickly and skated out onto the ice. He had to let this drive him not stop him.

Eros!

They can laugh all they want. But I’m going to let them see the real me, and when they see they won’t be laughing any more!

All the jumps were in the second half to up the difficulty and boost his score. In the first half he just had to show flair, show femininity. Be himself. Be seen.

No body else knows Hannibal’s love, I know that now. He’s the only one that always saw the real me and today that’s what I’m skating to prove.

He completed the jumps. All the jumps. He should feel elated, but he couldn’t let that in until he was done. He was about to complete a short program with the highest technical difficulty in history!

“Today love wins! No one can deny that was a perfect performance.” He could hear the commentator’s voice ringing out.

He panted and held his final position as the crowd cheered.

The only way he would win, the only way he would show them he deserved Hannibal was to have the confidence to be himself.

*

Will sat through his scores, trembling, Hannibal’s arm around his shoulder - crushing them together.

“How did it feel when you were out there - when you let people see you?”

“Good.” Will replied. Firm. “But… mostly I hope people felt good watching me.”

“How could they not. How could anyone not find joy in your beauty.” The words were soft but sincere. Will’s breath hitched painfully and he felt tears prick at the corners of his eyes.

The score was read before he could reply.

He was first.

He could still be bested and knocked down by one of the several other competitors left to skate, but for now…

“Have faith in yourself.” Hannibal muttered in his ear, clearly reading Will’s concern. “You’re the one to beat now. Just keep being yourself.”

*

Will made it to the screen in the training room in time to see the last skater - Chilton.

Peter and some of the others were already gathered to watch.

“You were amazing Will, you’re different. Not that you weren’t amazing before…” Peter gushed at him and Will smiled. Fred’s music started up before he could say anything and they all turned to the screen.

“He thought it would be a boring season without Hannibal, but it looks like he sees you as a challenge Will.” Peter grinned across as Fred settled into his skate.

Hannibal came up behind Will then, slipping his arms around his waist and watching over his shoulder. Will stilled for a second and then relaxed into the hold. It felt like something had changed. Was it last night? Or his performance? He wasn’t sure. What did it mean? He wanted it whatever it meant. He would take it.

“Hmm.” Hannibal muttered. “He’s a solid skater but he doesn't like to peek at the first event so he starts slowly. But, I will say it doesn't look like he’s holding anything back when it comes to sex appeal.”

Will fought himself as he wanted to stiffen in Hannibal’s arms at the mention of Fred’s sex appeal. It was true, on the ice it came across well, even if in person it made him seem a sleaze most of the time. Will reminded himself of Hannibal’s interaction with him in the locker room - there was no love lost there surely? Hannibal and Fred had seemed to always be around each other in the past, maybe as they were the older skaters? He had to fight down the jealousy that threatened to overwhelm him.

“Well, I guess Fred wins in the eros department today.” Will forced out a chuckle and then hitched his breath as Hannibal repositioned himself and ran a soothing hand up and down his back.

The scores came in. Fifth. Fred was fifth?

But that meant…

“You’re first place.” Hannibal crooned gently in his ear, leaning close. “You let them see you, and they loved you for it.”

Did you love me for it, Hannibal?

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Everyone is upping their game. Will has anxiety. Hannibal is confusing. Everything is about to implode.

Chapter Notes

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See the end of the chapter for more notes

A personal best score in the Short Program landed me in first place! I'm within reach of my first win of a Grand Prix Series event! I just have the Free Skate…

The thought of the skate kept running through Will's head as he tried to keep his breath steady. He had worked himself into such an anxious state that he barely slept - tossing and turning. Sweating and waking cold as he fell, down and down and through the ice in his dreams. Held under the ice.

Hannibal had seen the dark circles under his eyes at training and insisted he had to rest. He'd taken him back to his room. And then… they had fallen asleep. Will had been so exhausted he wasn't sure what had happened. Hannibal had practically manhandled him into the bed and he had fallen asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow. And now he lay awake and too aware of Hannibal to move.

The man was sleeping, heavily. His body half-draped across Will - trapping him in the bed. Why had Hannibal stayed? Why was he curled up to him? Why was Hannibal's head resting on his chest? The mixed signals were making Will even more anxious than he would have been alone.

Well, that wasn't quite true. Having Hannibal around had helped build his confidence and with it, settle his anxiety a little. But even so, this was not ok. Was it?

Will was trying to think what he should do about it when he dozed off again. When he woke a while later, Hannibal was gone.

*

Fuck!

He hit the ice hard and cringed as he got to his feet and continued. It was just the warm up and Hannibal had even told him not to try any jumps as he was clearly still exhausted and fraught.

Of course I'm fraught!

Why was Hannibal being so hot and cold? He could understand what he had said about wanting to be friends - just friends? That Will needed support with what he was going through. And ok, maybe that wasn't the right time for anything more than friends. But then he was sure Hannibal was going to kiss him. And he was still tactile, comforting Will with fond touches. He wanted to shake the man and tell him to stop fucking with his head like this.

The sound of the crowd 'ahhing' and 'oohing' as he went down was ringing in his ears. They felt sorry for him. He must look as though the Short Program had just been a lucky accident.

When he came off the ice Hannibal gave him a soft smile and put his arm around his shoulders.

"Don't worry. You can land it in competition even if you didn't in practice."

"I'm sorry." He exhaled the words wanting to actually spit them out. This was Hannibal's fault for messing with his confidence. He knew Hannibal liked him - the real Will - the way they spoke and how Hannibal looked at him, touched him. But the way he held back made Will hurt.

"We'll just keep working on it in practice."

*

Will watched the other skaters, some at rinkside, some on the screen in the training room. Either way, it was a bad idea. His confidence was ebbing. And maybe it wasn't just everything with Hannibal. He wasn't used to being the one to beat - the pressure was immense. He wondered how Hannibal had handled it. But he couldn't bring himself ask.

Chilton took to the ice and Will felt sick. He'd skated at the same level as Hannibal, they were friends in some ways, had a history. He was older, more experienced, more confident, more eros. How could he compete with Chilton?

Hannibal must have seen the look on his face. He wasn't sure what he would see if he looked in the mirror, perhaps a mix of nausea and terror. He marched over and grabbed Will's arm, pulling him gently away and out into the service corridor of the building.

He knew he was shaking as Hannibal led him to the parking lot beneath the rink. Directly beneath - he could hear the announcers calling Chilton's scores but it was too muffled to make out.

"What are they saying?" He asked anxiously.

"Take some deep breaths Will." Hannibal rested a hand on his lower back and guided him to double over and take the breaths as instructed.

“I’m fine.” Will pushed him off as he snapped the words out. Straightening up but taking the deep breaths anyway. Minutes passed and gradually the crowd above grew louder and louder. It was Peter skating, he knew, and the crowd was loving him. How could he compete with them all? He wasn’t Hannibal.

His breath stuttered and he felt his throat tighten, his chest was gripped with anxiety.

And then Hannibal was suddenly in front of him, looking - if not angry - stern. “Don’t listen!” he commanded and put his hands over Will’s ears.

The cheering was muffled as they stood, eyes locked to each others.

Will wasn’t sure how long had passed when he gently pulled Hannibal’s hands down from his ears, the cool air of the parking lot hitting them. “It’s… it’s almost time, Hannibal. We should go back.”

Hannibal studied him for a moment. He looked like he was trying to work out what to say. How to support him. Will wasn’t even sure. Hannibal had given him the most support anyone ever had - friend and coach rolled into one. But maybe it was over now? Maybe this season, coming back, trying to bring out something he had hesitated over for so many seasons - it had been a mistake. He started to walk away. Back towards the door into the building.

“Will, wait.” He turned and Hannibal was watching him with a determined look that was almost frightening.

“It will be partially my fault if you error in your program today and don’t make it onto the podium. I’ll take responsibility and resign as your coach.” The words were cold and emotionless.

Will felt his heart shatter like glass.

After a long moment, he felt the heat and then coolness of a tear trailing down his cheek. He couldn’t move. He couldn’t breathe. His chest was tight.

“Hannibal… Why… Do you mean that?” After everything they had been through - all these weeks upon weeks of training and getting to know each other - it wasn’t something he thought Hannibal would do. But…

Hannibal who blew hot and cold. Who wanted to support him, be his friend, but kept backing off. Was this all a game to him after all? Had it all just been about boosting his confidence after all? Or-

“Are you testing me?” Will asked, grasping at straws really. He felt another tear burn a trail.

“Will! Oh, Will. I’m…” Hannibal’s face softened, contrition writ large across it. “I didn’t… I didn’t mean it, I’m sorry.”

“I’m used to failing, Hannibal.” Will snapped out the words, straightening and wiping away the tears. “But this is the first time I have cared about it on someone else’s behalf. Knowing how it would reflect on you. I go out there and I let people see me - the real me - feel me. I let

them in and I am terrified that they will laugh at me, judge me. But I'm just as terrified of how that will reflect on you. What people will think and say about the legendary Hannibal Lecter coaching some confused loser."

"You're not-"

"I've spent so much time thinking about how it would be easier for you… how maybe you would perfer to quit but-"

"Will, no-"

"You took on a skater, you thought you took on a skater to coach and improve, but you got me. My mess. Me trying to figure out who I am. To embrace the me that I've started to become on the ice. That you've helped me become. You saw the real me and helped me see it too and now I want everyone to see my becoming. And I'm terrified Hannibal. I'm so terrified! But I can do it alone if I have to-"

"Will…" Hannibal breathed out his name and stepped closer, almost within touch. Will ran out of steam, panting, wiping his eyes. "You're not a mess. You're beautiful. I see you, I've always seen you. I want others to see you. I want to support you, I want to be what you need me to be, but… what is that? What do you need?"

Hannibal's eyes were searching.

He wanted everything Hannibal would give him. But Hannibal was reluctant because he didn't want to be something that Will just reached for during this time of need. Was that why he was reaching for Hannibal? Because he was there?

Or was it because he could see Hannibal too? Had always been able to, and what he saw was a reflection of something deep within himself.

Will took a shaky breath. Kept his voice level. "I just want you to have more faith in me than I do. You don't need to say anything. Just… stay close to me. Just, for now. After…" he sighed and turned away.

They walked back in silence. It was almost time.

Will took a breath and removed his jacket before taking to the ice and facing Hannibal over the rink barrier. He looked fraught, confused. He looked how Will felt. His hair had fallen forward as though he were trying to hide behind that fringe. It reminded Will of when he had first heard his new music - their training session. How exhausted Hannibal had been, how elated Will had been - finally feeling like things were clicking, coming together in his mind. How Hannibal's hair had-

He took a breath and leaned towards Hannibal, raising his hand and gently pushing the hair back and out of his eyes.

"Hannibal, I just need you to know that I can see you too."

*

I feel a lot better after crying. I've cried after a competition, but that's the first time I've cried before one.

Will found he was smiling. He felt lighter. Maybe Hannibal hadn't handled his anxiety well, the way an experienced coach might, but it had cleared the air. Made Will feel like he had the strength to be himself. On his own, without Hannibal, if need be.

He moved through the first quad and closed his eyes for a moment. Let himself relax into his body, into how he felt. He softened in some place, held in others. He let the lines of his body speak of the femininity he felt within. The female version of himself that was always there and waiting to be explored. She was always in his skating, in his dancing. She wanted more. Will wanted more.

Love changed me, I'm stronger now. Strong enough to let you all see!

He glided across the ice. Only one flubbed jump. But he could do it, bring up the points if he made the last quad a flip instead of a toe loop…

Over rotation. It wasn't perfect. And yet… it didn't matter.

He moved into the step sequence, then quadruple flip… and went down. He was up quickly and… it didn't matter.

Will held his final position and his eyes found Hannibal at the rinkside. Was he crying? Hannibal pushed the hair back from his face and smiled, and Will felt his heart jump.

He pushed off and skated back to rinkside. As he reached the barrier opening Hannibal pulled him off the ice, he stumbled into Hannibal's arms and was caught. He wasn't sure when he closed his eyes, but he kept them closed as Hannibal's mouth pressed against his own. Will's breath hitched as their lips slid together and he opened to Hannibal. For a moment the kiss deepened before Hannibal pulled back, still holding him close.

"Will, you were fantastic. You were beautiful. Everybody saw you. I saw you… I want to always see you."

Chapter End Notes

A bit of a shorter chapter, but hopefully what comes after their first kiss in chapter 8 will make up for it!

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will finally deal with how they feel about each other

Chapter Notes

Chapter 9 is almost finished, but I go back to work soon (been on Mat Leave) so it may take a little bit of time to finish the rest and post them, but (along with Cookies) this fic is one of my current writing priorities, so it will get finished ASAP <3

They barely said a word to each other as the competition closed and they gathered their things to head back to the hotel. There were furtive glances and shy smiles along with the necessary discussions about training and the next competition. It was the twinkle in Hannibal's eyes that reminded Will that the kiss had happened. Quick, almost discreet, but so full of feeling. It was the only thing on Will's mind as they went through the motions of packing up and returning to the hotel.

They were flying back to Louisiana fairly early the next morning so they should both try and get some sleep, and Will knew that. But he also knew he wasn't going to get a wink of sleep anyway. He couldn't help but wonder what was going to happen once they got to their rooms.

He had the answer soon enough when they were stood, suddenly and awkwardly, outside the door to his room.

"Don't, um… forget to set your alarm." Will said, nerves surfacing, he forced a grin that he didn't feel quite confident enough mean for real.

"I think it is broken." Hannibal's reply was quick and *his* grin was genuine. The glint in his eye was all Will needed, to understand the invitation there. It bolstered his confidence.

"Oh really? Perhaps we can share mine." Will replied, his grin growing with real meaning as he took his key card out of his pocket. "I could come wake you up when it goes off…" he teased.

Hannibal huffed with amusement and started to walk away, but Will dropped his gym bag and grabbed the back of Hannibal's coat, pulling him back. Hannibal turned and his momentum continued until he caged Will in his arms against the door.

Hannibal's mouth was on his then, tentative at first. Slow and exploratory - a longer, deeper version of their first kiss. Will reciprocated, moaning into the sensation as Hannibal's tongue slipped against his own. After a minute Will pressed his hands to Hannibal's chest, easing him back.

"What are we doing Hannibal?" he searched his face for an answer. He really needed to know that this was going somewhere - moving forward. He couldn't stand for Hannibal to go cold on him again. "I need… I need to know how you feel about all of this." *Me, us.*

Hannibal looked down at Will's hands against his chest and plucked the key card from where it was held against him. He swiped it and pushed the door open, locking eyes with Will as he did. They both moved with the door until they stood in the room. The door closed, gym bag forgotten in the corridor as Hannibal dropped the key card to the floor and moved his hand to Will's cheek. They studied each other for a long moment, until Hannibal finally spoke as he ran one hand up into Will's hair -

"I think I fell in love with you a little the first time I saw you, and every time after that a little more. Until we end up here and I am utterly unable to resist you." Hannibal looked nervous, as though he was expecting his words to be rejected.

It took a moment for Will to process them. Months they had trained together now. Months in which Will had tried to ignore the fact that he was falling in love with Hannibal. Not the love he had had for his idol when he was younger - not that aspirational, inspirational crush that he'd had from a distance. The crush that had kept him from talking to Hannibal at any competition they had been at together. This was something else.

He had thought at first that he loved only Hannibal's confidence. Or that he had loved the Hannibal he had first had a crush on - with long hair and feminine cut clothes, that spoke to him and made him want to be like him. But now all he could think of was the months of training and fishing, talking, laughing. All those moments in between where life seemed to happen, often over a bowl of gumbo. He knew something in that moment that he had not let himself see for fear of the rejection. He had fallen in love.

His breath hitched and Hannibal smiled. There was a moment's hesitation before Hannibal leaned in and kissed him again. There was a question in it, which was answered by Will's reciprocation.

Slowly Hannibal's hands eased Will's coat off his shoulders and started to unbutton his shirt, finally drawing back from the kiss when the undressing necessitated. He smiled and Will thought he might melt into the fingers that worked open his buttons and pushed his shirt off too. The clothes landed with a soft thud.

Hannibal's eyes were full of adoration when his hands slipped to Will's belt buckle. A shiver ran over Will's skin and he put his hands on Hannibal's to still them.

"Hannibal… I…" breathing through the sudden adrenaline surge made it difficult to talk. But he had to force the words out before this went any further. "I need you. Not as my coach… not only… I mean…"

“What do you mean Will?” Hannibal’s tone was lightly teasing, his eyes bright.

“I…” He cupped Hannibal’s face in his hands. “I mean I love you.” He didn’t need to pull Hannibal into a kiss, it happened anyway.

Saying it out loud was strangely freeing. He couldn't have said it any sooner even if he had really known what that nagging feeling was.

Hannibal’s mouth moved to his bare shoulder, lacing kisses along the tingling skin. Then he moved lower, kissing along Will’s chest. There was such reverence in the action that it was nothing short of intoxicating. Will couldn’t even try to stifle his moan as Hannibal dropped to his knees in front of him, his hands snaking Will’s waist, holding him close as he kissed across Will’s belly.

“I love your seafood gumbo belly, do you know that?” Hannibal spoke the words breathlessly. Will dropped his head into his hands, letting out a groan somewhere between amusement and embarrassment.

Hannibal chuckled at the reaction and moved back. With gentle hands, he loosened Will’s belt and unzipped his trousers, letting them drop only enough to expose the top of Will’s hips. Will knew Hannibal must feel him shaking as kisses dipped lower, tickling across his skin.

“Hannibal…” Will breathed out the name on a sigh, his hands sliding into Hannibal’s hair, for support as much as anything, as his knees threatened to buckle. He could hear Hannibal’s heavy breaths as he pulled Will’s trousers lower, until they pooled at his ankles.

“I… Will, I have wanted you, wanted this so very… I… ” Hannibal’s expression was beyond adoration and into some sort of serenity. Will could feel it, mirrored it.

When Hannibal nosed along the hard line of his still-clothed cock, Will shuddered and stumbled.

Hannibal caught him around the waist with a laugh and stood, lifting Will out of his trousers and to the bed. They dropped to the bed with a laugh. Hannibal grinned as he lay over him. The grin softened into something more gentle and full of wonder as Hannibal drew back and his eyes swept over him.

“How am I constantly surprised by your beauty?” Hannibal sounded breathless. “I should know better by now.”

Will blushed. He knew he was petite and slender when naked - hard musculature finished with a feminine softness - when he held himself in such a way. He arched almost as instinct, wanting to display his body that way to Hannibal.

Hannibal’s breath caught and he let it out slowly before manoeuvring to hook his fingers in the waistband of Will’s underwear. He was gentle, almost reverent, as he slipped the underwear down and off. They both drew breath and Hannibal’s warm smile washed over him. It lingered as Hannibal began to remove his own clothes until he was in just his underwear.

He held Will's gaze as he slipped them down.

Will had been around naked Hannibal before, but not in a context like this - that allowed for open and invited viewing. And not when Hannibal had been erect. Will's breath caught. Hannibal was beautiful. Lithe and athletic, but more masculine than he had somehow imagined. Either way, the sight was breathtaking.

Will smiled and held out a hand. Hannibal was over him then and Will gasped at the sudden sensation of their naked bodies pressed together - mutual arousal clear.

Will let out a sound that was something nearer to a whimper than a moan, as Hannibal pushed their hips together and moved against him. Will grabbed Hannibal's shoulders and gripped them tight as though for holding on for dear life, which drew a chuckle from the man.

Hannibal leaned in, lips close to his ear, accent thick and sensual - "I want to take this slow, Will. I've… I've been ridiculous, trying to hold back my feelings for you. I didn't want to confuse things but then I saw how much it… how you… I want to watch you come undone. I want to spend hours pleasuring you. I don't think I can go another minute without doing so."

Will moaned and threw an arm across his heated face, as Hannibal's lips pressed to his neck. He wanted Hannibal to be satisfied too and yet he found himself already unable to speak, or string together much rational thought, as Hannibal's tongue worked over his skin.

Hannibal's lips took a similar path as before, kissing, nipping and licking, as he journeyed down Will's body. Will was shaking, the end destination telegraphed clearly as Hannibal moved lower down the bed. Even so, he gasped when Hannibal took him into his mouth. And then he groaned.

He had rarely been intimate with people before. It was hard to be when you struggled to know more about yourself. When he'd had sex it wasn't passionate, it wasn't mind blowing. It just was. A means to an end in some ways. But with Hannibal's mouth on him, he discovered a new level of bliss.

"Oh god." His toes curled, and his fingers moved to grasp at the bedspread, bunching it up in his fists as he tried to tether himself to something. He might float away.

Hannibal's mouth was warm and wet as he worked him - slow and sensual. Making love to him with lips and tongue. Will could barely breath.

He felt a pleasurable ache pooling within him, enough warning to have Hannibal stop. "Wait… Han… wait." Will tried to catch his breath as he managed to force one hand from the bed and into Hannibal's hair, to gently guide him back. "I want you… I want us to… together…" he stammered out the words and felt the blush on his cheeks.

Hannibal had pulled back from him and looked up the length of his body. His voice was deep and his eyes filled with lust - "I… want that too Will. But I didn't… I hadn't expected, or planned. So, I didn't bring any…" Will was sure Hannibal blushed but he hid it by dipping his face to Will's thighs and lacing kisses there.

Will stroked his hair, thoughtful. “I don’t want to cum alone. I want us to… there must be…” He hadn’t for one minute thought about such details as lube or condoms. If he had he wasn’t even sure he’d have had the nerve to suggest they pick some up on the way back to the hotel.

Hannibal’s hands clutched gently at Will’s thighs, his breath panting hot against Will’s lower belly. “There… There is…” Hesitation and then a slight shudder as Hannibal clearly imagined a possibility for them.

He began crawling back up and off Will’s body, guiding him over onto his side and coming up to eventually spoon behind him. Will’s skin felt like it was on fire at every point of contact, a nervous energy running through him as he felt Hannibal’s hard cock pressed against the crease of his ass. He arched back into it as Hannibal began to mouth at the crook of his neck.

The thought of Hannibal inside him, moving slowly but firmly until both of them came, was so tantalising it made his cock ache.

“Hannibal, what…” Will’s words trailed off as Hannibal’s teeth found his earlobe and nibbled. Stopping briefly to utter -

“You’re so beautiful.” as his hand slid over and around Will’s thigh.

Will’s breath hitched - he’d expected Hannibal to take his cock in hand, but instead he clutched at his thigh again. This time more firm, but still gentle as he guided Will’s leg apart. A moment later he felt Hannibal adjust behind him and the hardness of his cock as he allowed Will’s thigh’s back together.

“Han-” all and any questions were cut off as Hannibal thrust forward once. Slowly, and delicately. Will made a high and involuntary noise that might have been “oh!” which extended into a moan as Hannibal did then circle a soft fist around Will.

It was slow at first, Hannibal’s hard cock pressing under Will’s balls, tantalisingly close to being inside him, but not quite. And Will found he was suddenly grateful. As his mind spun out on the pleasure and his skin tingled with the overwhelming sensations, Will came apart wondering how he would ever survive anything more than this.

He was almost liquid, melting back into Hannibal as his hand began to pump Will a little faster, always in time with his own thrusts. His eyes closed and he could barely steady his breath, letting out another shuddering moan as Hannibal swiped his thumb over the slit of his cock, spreading the precum in circular motions until Will thought he might stop breathing altogether.

A moment later he felt that pooling ache again. “Hannibal… I’m so close…” he managed to force the words out on breath he didn’t have and could ill afford to waste - leaving him panting even harder.

Hannibal, forehead pressed to Will’s skin, started to thrust his hips faster, harder - his hand still keeping pace. Only a few more strokes were required before Will was cumming. Harder than he ever had before, intense pleasure coursing through him. Hannibal slowed as he

stroked him through it and Will reached a hand around, finding purchase on the top of Hannibal's thigh - pulling him in, willing him on to his own end.

Hannibal moved his hand to Will's hip, holding him there as he continued, hard and fast, the last few shallow thrusts before he was spilling between Will's thighs.

Will tried in vain to catch his breath. Panting turning to moaning turning to stuttering sobs. He took hold of the hand on his hip and brought it up to his mouth, kissing it. "I love you Hannibal."

Hannibal shifted only slightly behind him, only enough to move his head back to the crook of Will's neck, hot breath across Will's cheek. "I love you… and…" his hand moved to squeeze Will's thigh. "I love your thighs…" he let out a fond and intoxicated chuckle. "I've been wanting to do that for some time. I knew the thighs of such a beautiful skater would be exquisite."

Will frowned and then huffed out a chuckle. It was absurd, but it was honest and raw, silly, and full of adoration. It was very Hannibal.

*

It was early, before his alarm, when Will woke. He couldn't remember the last time he had slept so well. But it wasn't the natural waking from a satisfied sleep - after a night of tender exploration. It was the gentle hand playing absently in his hair as he nestled in the crook of Hannibal's arm.

"Morning." Will murmured, basking in the smile it earned him.

"Good morning." Hannibal replied, leaning in for a soft kiss before trailing over his skin. "I'm sorry." the words were nuzzled against Will's shoulder.

Will chuckled. "For waking me so early?"

"No… For, before. I never meant to hurt you but I'm sure it must have. When I think about it…" Hannibal pulled back to study Will's face. "I behaved terribly. I thought I was doing the right thing, not letting us get involved when you are going through so much, but… I never meant to hurt you."

"What changed your mind?" Will asked, running his hand up into Hannibal's hair, smiling at it as he pulled the fringe forward slightly.

"You did. What you said beneath the rink. It made me realise how much I had been hurting you. But also, I had to reconsider why. I realised that I had forgotten quite how strong you are. That no matter what happens between us, you will be as resilient as you always have been. If the worst happened, you would face the world with as much fearless strength as you already do. With or without me by your side in any capacity."

Will stared at him. "I'm… not resilient. Or strong." He frowned at Hannibal's smile.

“Of course you are, you remarkable boy. You’re still here, still skating. Despite your past, despite the excitement and anxiety of your current self discovery, despite the weight of your future.” the tender smile curved into a soft grin. “And you have courage enough for all of that and to take me on as well.”

Will chuckled. “You make a good point.” He pulled Hannibal into a kiss, determined to make the most of the time before they had to leave.

*

In Hasetsu, to no side glances or surprised words, Hannibal took to sleeping in Will’s room. Curled around him, over him, under him. Sleeping soundly in the small bed after long hours of training for the next competition in Hannibal’s native Lithuania - even when Winston sought to sleep on their feet.

A ritual between them had developed, of tending the scrapes and bruises of the other after gruelling training on unrelenting ice. These were mostly Will’s - tended by Hannibal with soft kisses over delicate skin.

“Hannibal, will you look after me like this if I fall in competition?” Will near moaned as Hannibal’s tongue worked over a bruise where his thigh met his hip.

Hannibal chuckled. “As your coach I will impress on you the importance of landing perfectly every time… As your boyfriend-” the press of a light kiss “- I can deny you nothing.”

Weeks were filled with training, fishing, laughing. Intimacy. Beyond anything Will had ever known. Happiness, beyond anything either of them had ever known.

The next competition seemed to come around much faster than the others had. Before he knew it they were landing in Vilnius to curious reporters asking questions that made Hannibal laugh, and Will blush as they both said “No comment.” over and over.

*

Hannibal had suggested they stay in his apartment, but Will insisted he wanted to be next to the rink, in the hotel with the other skaters. To get his head in it. It would be too easy to fall into some sort of domesticated bliss with Hannibal. Not only that, Will was kind of nervous. He’d seen pictures of Hannibal’s flat in a photoshoot and interview from a couple of years earlier. It was breathtaking. Expensively so. And Will wasn’t quite ready to consider the disparity of their situations just yet.

Hannibal had understood and said that he had to go and check on the place anyway and would meet Will at the hotel, and book a room.

On his way up to his room, Will wondered if it would be next to Hannibal’s. He wondered if they would end up using only one. The thought of waking alone when he could sleep nestled in Hannibal’s arms was all consuming. He hardly noticed as a foot stopped the elevator door closing, but as it sprang open again he looked up with a smile to see Frank. He wondered if Frank had made a show with Jack about being forced to stay in the hotel with the other

skaters rather than travel home everyday. He hid a smile at the thought of the tantrum the teen had likely had.

“Frank! Good to see you again!” He meant it. He had been sad that Frank had left Hasetsu without a word, but he understood why. He knew enough of the boy to know why he did that, and why he was sullen now as they shared the small space alone. “I know both of us can’t win, but I’m sure we’ll both skate well.” Will offered.

“No, you will suffer a miserable fate here.” The words had that tinge of teenage brutality that Will had come to expect, he even found himself smiling at it a little until Frank followed spitefully with - “And then Hannibal will stay in Lithuania.”

The elevator stopped and Frank wordlessly departed.

Will knew, was sure… completely certain, that Hannibal wouldn’t leave him. Knew that he could trust in what there was between them, but even so, his mind was always going to go to that worst case scenario that fed his anxiety -

What if he’s right? If I don’t break higher than fourth here I won't advance to the grand prix final,and if I don’t… what will Hannibal do then?

Hannibal has his own life. His own career. If I flunk out then I won’t need a coach anymore, he could coach someone else, or go back to skating. It would mean we might not be together - could we make it work long distance?

*

Skaters came and went. Milling around them, on and then off the ice and then another. Will could do nothing but warm up and focus, waiting to be near last. In the past he had always preferred to skate as soon as possible. Waiting to skate whilst the crowds cheered for others gave the anxiety time to build. But then, he’d hated skating first too as it meant waiting and watching as other skater’s bested his scores one by one.

Today he pushed all that down as he headed to the rink with Hannibal at his side. He felt confident. Determined. He looked over at Hannibal and he felt… loved. At that love - given freely for who he was, for every part of him - only served to make his confidence grow.

And he needed that. He already knew from the reaction of the press, he was not well liked here. He may have managed to prove himself elsewhere, but there wasn’t a skate fan in Lithuania who didn’t feel that he had stolen Hannibal away. That he had taken their most beloved champion.

When they got to the rink he stopped and Hannibal smiled at him, kept smiling at him as he crouched down in front of him, taking to one knee as he started to check and tighten his laces. Will’s breath hitched a little as a hand smoothed down his calf. Seeing Hannibal on his knee brought a warmth to his chest. He could do this, he could make it to the finals, and keep Hannibal at least as long as then. They had talked about a new costume for the finals, then designed it together.

The power of love.

Laces tight, Hannibal stood wordlessly, smiling. Will took a centreing breath and moved onto the ice before turning back to Hannibal across the barrier. The crowd was chanting and it took him a moment to realise they were calling for Hannibal. Hannibal was grinning and waving at the crowd, geeing them up. They loved him. Will loved him.

Will's heart was beating fast and he acted before he could even think about it - reaching out and grabbing Hannibal's tie. Tugging his coach, his lover, towards him until he was able to whisper in his ear, voice gravel -

"I'm going to go out there and show my love to the whole of Lithuania. Prove to them all that you belong with me."

He pushed off from the barrier and took up his first position without a glance back, but he could feel Hannibal's eyes on him.

He put more into it than he even knew he had to give.

No one here wants me to win. They want Hannibal. And he's mine.

He heard Hannibal call out his support when he landed a perfect triple salchow. The program was more complicated than it had ever been. But it was still eros. He was eros.

As he halted in his final position he was facing Hannibal. Their eyes connecting and something passing between them, as he panting and tried to catch his breath. Pride, admiration, love. Will felt bathed in it. It was a few moments before he even realised the crowd were going crazy for him. He had won them over.

The scores came in once they settled on the bench. He had beaten his personal best again, and was now in first place. He was stunned. He felt good, but he had skated for himself, for Hannibal - the scores had almost been meaningless when he was actually on the ice.

He turned to Hannibal and saw nothing but love in his face.

"Hannibal I did it, I-"

He lost his words as Hannibal dropped down in front of him and lifted one of his legs, hands taking gentle hold as he raised the booted foot and kissed the skate. Their eyes connected and Hannibal grinned at the rising blush on Will's face. There was a promise of something in Hannibal's smile.

*

With two skaters left, Will knew there was every chance he could still be bumped down. He and Hannibal watched at rinkside as Frank took to the ice. They cheered for him, both unbidden as they did so, before sharing a smile about it. Frank was a little shit, but he had come to mean something to both of them in his own way.

Frank seemed off. And as he skated, that came through in his program. It seemed like he had lost agape.

When Will looked at Hannibal he was frowning, not at Frank, but at the crowd as he looked around. “What is it?” Will asked, his attention flitting between Hannibal and Frank, before Hannibal’s gaze settled back on the young dragon.

“His grandmother isn’t here. I hope everything is well.”

Will frowned and hoped for the best. He was unsurprised when, despite a fall and some loss of focus, Frank’s scores put him in second place.

Will wasn’t sure how to feel about the mixed emotions that brought up in him. There was something about Frank - a promise of true talent beyond anything he would ever possess - Will could only wish there was a way for them to both win.

His thoughts were interrupted by the final skater - the insufferable Matthew Brown. A crowd favourite worldwide it seems, the audience cheered for him almost as much as they had done their own native Frank. His skate was good, confident.

Will was wondering where Matt might place when he felt his phone buzzing in his pocket. It was set for no contact except from his dad and Bev, and they knew only to call if it was an emergency. His heart leapt into his throat and his hand was shaking when he answered the call.

It was Bev.

“Will, I’m really sorry to call you during competition, but I needed to let you know. Your dad called me and… we’re at the veterinary hospital. It’s Winston. He got into the kitchen and ate some of the cajun chicken your dad cooked up. A bone got lodged in his throat.. They’re operating now but… he might not make it.”

The crowd was going mad for Matt, Will could barely hear over the noise of their reaction to his scores being called. It didn’t matter.

“Hannibal, you need to go, I can handle the free skate tomorrow on my own. It’s… it's Winston.” He started to explain quickly, hurting as Hannibal’s face fell and he leaned his forehead against Will’s.

“But… I can’t leave you.” Will could tell he meant it even as he then whimpered the name - “Winston.”

“You have to go Hannibal.” Will urged him. He would rather not skate at all than have Hannibal stay when he might be losing Winston. Will knew how it felt to lose a dog, but moreover he knew without ever being told that Winston was the only constant source of support and affection that Hannibal had had in years. Before Will.

Hannibal was shaking his head when he looked up and spotted his old coach - Frank’s coach - Jack Crawford, moving away from rinkside and towards them.

“Jack! Please - I need you, can you coach Will, just one day. Just tomorrow.” The words were calm and firm, it was only the fact that Hannibal spoke them with no breath taken that gave away his true and deep concern.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

> “They…” Will giggled, almost wondering at the fact that he would have been embarrassed in the past, but now he truly felt like he was the femme fatale and this playboy had no idea what was about to hit him. “They have a snap crotch.”

Standing in the hotel lobby, Will tried to be strong. Hannibal had become such a massive support to him he really wasn’t sure how he was going to get through the free skate - other than knowing that he had to. He had to do it for the both of them.

Resilience, strength, courage.

All this time Hannibal had held back from him because he hadn’t wanted Will to become reliant and dependent on him as more than just a coach… and now he wasn’t even going to be that for the the rest of the event. Will took a breath and forced a smile. He was going to prove he could do this.

“Ask Jack if you need anything. If you’re in trouble just hug him - he’ll be there for you” Hannibal pulled Will into a tight embrace that Will tried not to let consume him - he might never let the man go. “I’ll be with you in spirit.” Hannibal whispered against him as he buried his face in the crook of Will’s neck. He felt Hannibal shudder as he took a deep breath and pressed a kiss to Will’s neck before pulling away. Wordlessly, Hannibal collected his bags and went out to the waiting taxi.

*

Before the free skate Will found himself once more training with Frank. The familiar presence of the surly teen was surprisingly comforting. For him at least - Frank was as aggravated by him as usual, which at least was slightly amusing.

Bedelia du Maurier arrived in the training room and gave him only a cursory glance before pointedly ignoring him and going to Frank.

“You will be your best today, mylimasis. You're grandmother is watching and expects much of you.” she watched appraising, as he stretched. “That's it Francis, remember - feminine grace.”

Will watched them interact. Frank seemed focused in a way he hadn't before. Determined. Far from feeling nervous or intimidated, Will felt proud of him. When he looked at Frank he saw someone he wished he could have been at that age. Despite being *the competition*, Will genuinely wanted the boy to do well.

When the free skate started Will kept reminding himself of Hannibal's words -

resilience, strength, courage… beauty.

As each skater went to the ice, he reminded himself anew. When Frank skated, Will had no chance to feel anything but awe.

He had developed a more feminine style - his body telling of the ballet he had been learning. Will wished someone had driven him in a more feminine direction at that age, not that he could fault Bev for her teachings. But perhaps he might have grown into himself earlier, known himself better. But in Frank, it was a surface thing. For show - marketing. To win. And Will couldn't fault that at all.

Will watched with something like nervous excitement as Frank skated an amazing free skate program. It was a personal best and landed him in a well-deserved first place. Will didn't even feel conflicted about the happiness he felt for Frank in that moment. He couldn't - it would be like hating a little brother.

*

He took to the ice already in second place to Frank. And despite his earlier joy for the talented teen, he knew he had to win. In his mind he knew it was twisted somehow, but he felt that winning here, without Hannibal, would show he deserved him. Prove to Hannibal that there wasn't a dependency there - that he had been right to let their relationship unfold.

Anxiety washed through him and his second jump turned into a single.

Dammit. Calm down!

He had to clear his mind. He had always skated for gold, even if he had never got there. He created this program with Hannibal, but if he didn't get gold the fault would be his alone. He would do it. For Hannibal.

I've made it this far because Hannibal believes in me. But whether he's here or I'm alone, it's the same program… just as difficult.

He pushed himself on and on, harder than he ever had. He finished to the roar of the crowd.

Waiting with Jack for the scores after his skate was agonising without Hannibal by his side. Will fidgeted nervously, which seemed to irk Jack.

Third. He could still advance.

He grabbed Jack and held onto him, hugging him for all he was worth. Needing to pour out the joy and relief.

He did it.

I really want the gold now. I want to give Hannibal gold.

*

There's so much I need to tell Hannibal. What will I say first?

When he came through the airport, Hannibal was waiting. He paused to look through the glass barrier that separated them - their eyes locked on each. Hannibal's conveyed so much even at the distance - relief, joy, love. Will felt a shiver over his skin - the same he often felt when Hannibal touched him. They were so close now. Soon they could kiss and touch, and laugh and talk. Will suddenly realised the weight of his own emotions - how much he had missed Hannibal but suppressed in order to make it through.

And then Will was running, his eyes not leaving Hannibal's as he started to run as well. Both watched the other as they went the length of the barrier to the exit that would reunite them.

The door opened and Will raced through it towards Hannibal's open and waiting arms. He was within reach when he was knocked sideways and the air hit out of him. Confused at first, he joined Hannibal's laughter when he realised it was an excited and recovered Winston that had hit him. Hannibal's laugh downgraded to a cheeky grin as he held out a hand to help Will up and pull him into the delayed embrace.

"Apparently I am not the only one glad to see you."

Will laughed against Hannibal's neck as he muttered "I hope at least, that you missed me more."

Hannibal hummed his confirmation and then turned into Will's lips to bring them together in a kiss.

Will had been expecting eager passion, but should have known better. Instead Hannibal kissed him long and slow - full of promise. They only parted, with more laughter, as Winston began to whine.

Will studied Hannibal's face, his openly loving gaze.

"Hannibal… will you stay with me? I don't want us to be apart if we don't have to. Will you be my coach, until I retire? And then after-"

"After? Forever? That sounds like a marriage proposal." Hannibal chuckled. He pulled Will back to him, nuzzling his face into the crook of Will's neck "surely you would know my answer."

It wasn't a question.

*

The drive back to Will's home felt like an age. Hannibal filled Will in on how well Winston had recovered - which was self evident - how everyone had watched his skating on the television, and that the costume they had designed had arrived. All whilst their hands played over each others, fingers interlocking, stroking.

Will was excited at the thought of the costume, seeing it in reality rather than the sketches and swatches they'd had so far in their interactions with Hannibal's costumier. The thought of it waiting in his room was warming.

Once home and with obligatory hellos and congratulations out of the way Will impatiently steered Hannibal to the bedroom.

"I'm unsure if you're eager to see me or the costume." Hannibal laughed.

Will just grinned and grabbed the box from the bed.

Hannibal moved behind him, watching over his shoulder and slipping hands around Will's waist. Will paused. He was eager to see the costume, but Hannibal's hands on him sent a shiver through him. The box all but fell from his hands and back onto the bed, the contents spilling.

Will didn't have chance to think further about the flash of silver as he turned in Hannibal's arms. He reached his hands up into Hannibal's hair and pulled him forward until their lips met, hungrily. He kissed and nipped as his hands moved down then, pushing the jacket back and off of Hannibal's shoulders. He pulled back only for the necessity of removing his own sweater. Then continuing to undress. He unbuttoned and removed his shirt, and pulled off his t-shirt. All the while he watched Hannibal and after a few moments Hannibal had begun to do the same. They're eyes were locked on each others- a mirrored gaze of need and desire.

Will kicked off his shoes and hesitated only a moment before pulling down his trousers and boxers and kicking those off too. He was mesmerised as Hannibal did the same, until Hannibal stood naked and hard, and Will stood the same - only still in his socks.

He realised and started to pull off the first sock, and then the second, hopping and trying to keep balance as it proved more difficult than expected. He realised he was going to fall over just in time to angle himself at the bed. He fell onto it heavily, still gripping at his foot, as Hannibal watched - bemused.

"So graceful." Hannibal teased.

Will started to laugh. "Would you just… Just come here."

They shared a light laugh and Hannibal moved to Will. He knelt down at the side of the bed and gently removed Will's remaining sock before climbing up and over him- pressing him into the bed.

"I missed you." He breathed the words against Will's neck.

They were kissing again and Hannibal started to move, to slowly rut against him, pressing their cocks together as they both grew hard and the friction sparked between them and every nerve within them.

After a few minutes of delightful teasing, Will broke the kiss. "Wait… I have… I bought…" He could feel heat rising in his cheeks and knew he wouldn't be able to force the words.

He squirmed out from under an increasingly amused Hannibal, leaving him sprawled on the bed and watching with an intrigued and amused expression.

Will crouched down and opened his case. He felt something like bashful, coy. Not nervous or apprehensive, in fact he was eager and full of anticipation. He took in a shaky breath and looked over to Hannibal.

“Would you… Close your eyes?”

Hannibal’s smile was soft even if it was something near a grin. He rolled onto his back and covered his eyes with his hands, his hard cock twitching where it rested heavily against his belly.

Will pulled the bag from his case, smooth and dainty, like the contents. He opened the bag and pulled out the silk underwear. He had guessed at the size and hadn’t tried them on yet, he now wished he had just in case they didn’t fit. But it had been an impulse buy and he hadn’t been thinking ahead.

He stood and pulled on the panties, lilac silk shorts with a soft lace trim, and then the matching camisole vest. The silk fell light and cool over his skin, and it sent a shiver over him. He had picked a size or two bigger than he thought might fit, and that seemed to have been a good idea considering it wasn’t meant for his body shape. It wasn’t baggy, but more of drape as they should fit a woman, not too small or clinging to him tightly.

Will closed his own eyes before he turned to his mirror, only able to really see the top half of his body when he opened his eyes. But it was enough. Enough to make his heart race.

Will didn’t buy into the idea of things- clothes, hobbies, interests - being inherently gendered. He didn’t think of things in a binary. He had known this for sometime but not quite how it slotted together. He knew that it could be considered that wearing women’s clothing and skating in a feminine style was just a reflection of bucking gender norms. And maybe on some level that was the case.

But on another level Will, as everyone, rightly or wrongly associated these things with being masculine or feminine. Regardless, Will on occasion felt feminine and it was through these things he could express that. So whilst wearing feminine underwear shouldn’t mean anything, it truly did.

He studied himself in the mirror for a moment and then cocked his hip and smiled. It felt nice, the material was softer than anything he’d ever worn before and felt like it melted into his own softness. But more than anything he liked the way it looked. His firm belly poked out beneath the cammy, too short on him, but it looked good. He slipped his fingers in the waistband and moved the shorties down to sit low on his hips, revealing more taut skin.

His heart was racing as he turned back to Hannibal, his eyes still closed but his smile ever changing as he tried to work out what Will was doing.

Will climbed onto the bed, straddling Hannibal’s thighs, just below his leaking cock. He pulled Hannibal’s hands away from his still closed eyes and onto his hips. As he felt the

hands exploring the silk and then bunching it in his fists, Will leaned in and whispered against Hannibal's lips -

"You can open your eyes now."

Hannibal looked up at him with a mixture of amusement and wonder.

"Will…" he breathed out the name. "You're so beautiful."

Hannibal said that a lot, it was his favourite term of affection for Will it seemed, but Will truly felt it this time. When he might shy away before, he sighed and relaxed into Hannibal's hands as they slide up the silk covering his waist.

He arched at Hannibal's touch, curving as he raised his arms above his head, sliding his hips forward as he did so. Their cocks pressed together, separated only by the thin silk. Hannibal moaned and his hands roamed as though he couldn't get enough of the fabric gliding over Will's skin.

"I want you Hannibal." Will rasped. Hannibal's breath hitched.

In the many weeks they had been physical they had taken it slow. Explored each other to a mutual satisfaction, he had let Hannibal touch him intimately many times. He had cum with Hannibal's fingers inside him, but they had never gone further than that. It was nothing planned, they had just been taking their time getting there and Will appreciated that. Life was overwhelming enough already right now.

Except, in that moment - Hannibal so adoringly lost in him - Will needed him. Will needed to feel Hannibal inside him.

Hannibal's hands moved down to the silk at the top of Will's thighs, stroking and fingering the lace edging of the shorts before slipping a hand around to stroke will's crack through the material.

"I don't think I want you to take these off but…"

Will shook his head and grinned, grinning wider as colour rose in Hannibal's face. Hannibal seemed almost meek. This was certainly the most forward and confident Will had ever felt off the ice and it was clearly doing something to his lover.

"They…" Will giggled, almost wondering at the fact that he would have been embarrassed in the past, but now he truly felt like he was the femme fatale and this playboy had no idea what was about to hit him. "They have a snap crotch."

He raised up on his knees, strategically pulling the shorts until poppers popped and the silk was almost a skirt. He lowered himself back down. Hannibal groaned and grabbed his hips tight as their cocks were flesh to flesh now.

"Oh god Will." Hannibal gasped, "I think I might die." Will chuckled and Hannibal laughed. "it's ok, this is how I wanted to go."

The laughter turned to a growl and Hannibal roughly rolled them. Will was still laughing as he arched up off the bed. Hannibal's hands slipped up under the camisole, pushing it up to reveal Will's firm stomach - competition had burned off the last of his gumbo belly - for now.

Hannibal laced kisses across from hip to hip, making Will shudder.

"Please Hannibal." He near begged as he arched up again. Just the thought of Hannibal's fingers was making his cock ache, and he knew that would only be the start of it this time.

Hannibal moved off for a moment and grabbed the lube and a condom from the bedside table. Will noted that his lover's breath was shaky, and he felt his own chest swell in response. There was something about making the ridiculously controlled man he loved start to come apart at the seams.

Will closed his eyes and lay back, spreading his legs and welcoming Hannibal's slicked fingers as they started to tease and press at him. He'd loved every time Hannibal had done this to him, sometimes whilst sucking him into his mouth, other times teasing that sweet spot inside until he was practically sobbing. Anticipation pooled along with his arousal as he imagined what was to come.

As Hannibal's hands moved against him, the silk slipped and slid against his skin, causing an almost overwhelming sensation that had him painfully hard.

He moaned and arched again as Hannibal pressed a finger inside him, the silk of the camisole brushing over his nipples as he did so - making him gasp and fist his hands in the sheet at his sides. It felt like some sort of agonisingly sweet torture as Hannibal worked him open. Gentle fingers pressing within him as lips pressed equally gentle kisses to the inside of his thighs. Hannibal nuzzled against them, muttered adoration for this strong and soft flesh. Will might have giggled at the adoration were he not so lost to the sensation.

Hannibal slowly drew back and Will felt the loss of his fingers keenly, but his breath hitched in anticipation. His eyes were still closed but he knew Hannibal was looking down at him, knew it for certain when Hannibal's hands began to wander over him again, finding skin and silk in equal measure.

"You are so very, very beautiful." The words came out on a soft sigh and Will smiled.

Hannibal's hands were gone then and Will could hear the condom wrapper and the pop of the lube cap again. His breath was coming out in short, stuttering gasps as he fought against the overwhelming anticipation.

There was another kiss to his thigh and he opened his eyes to see Hannibal move between his legs and lift his hips a little. Will allowed himself to be position and settled into it, watching with fascination, the almost unreadable micro-expressions rippling across Hannibal's face as how overwhelmed he was became clear too.

Hannibal drew a breath and then pushed in. Will let out a short cry, the stretch uncomfortable but not painful. Hannibal stilled and Will smiled at him, a reassurance, before Hannibal pulled back and pushed in further.

The stretch became an exquisite type of pleasure as Hannibal filled him, the sensation of the slow thrusts against his well teased and now sensitive rim was a newfound bliss.

When Hannibal pushed again, pressing forward until he was completely seated within Will, he stopped. Will panted and clutched at the sheets again, until he anticipation threatened to overwhelm him completely and he moaned - “move Hannibal, please…”

Hannibal drew another shaky breath and then obliged, leaning forward and caging will beneath him as he began a rhythm of slow, powerful thrusts.

“Oh god!” the words escaped from Will as he felt revelled in the pleasurable new sensations. He moved his hands up to grab at Hannibal, digging painfully into skin, and encouraging more. Hannibal obliged - setting a faster pace, but still deep and hard. Will’s eyes watered and his breath came in little gasps between thrusts.

He yelped when Hannibal unexpectedly reached between them and took his cock in hand, stroking him in time with his thrusts. Will was lost to it then, his eyes closing and head falling back once more, tears brimming in his eyes as he threatened to be engulfed in pure bliss.

His orgasm happened suddenly, and he was unable to stop his muscles clenching almost painfully around Hannibal, as his cum spattered up the silk cami. Hannibal must have been close too, because he grunted at the feel of Will tightening around him, and then snapped his hips a few more times before every muscle holding him above Will, tensed as he cried out. He collapsed, breathless and panting, on top of Will, humming his contentment when Will’s arms wrapped around him.

When he had recovered his breath enough Will lamented with a chuckle - “I think I ruined my underwear.”

Hannibal replied in a low, rough voice - “I will buy you many, many replacements.”

*

When Will woke up he felt sore, but satisfied - sated. It was a discomfort that brought enjoyable memories and he strangely found himself liking it.

He discovered that Hannibal was already awake, lying on his side next to him and watching him. He broke into a smile when Will raised an eyebrow at him. He was pulled into a kiss then before they snuggled back down together.

They talked on and off for a while, mostly about nothing in particular, more an avoidance of having to get out of bed and get back into training. Another hour or two or rest and relaxation couldn’t hurt. They laughed and Hannibal rolled on top of Will, a mirror of how they had made love the night before, he lowered his head until their foreheads touched.

Hannibal’s fringe fell forward and Will chuckled as it tickled him, reaching up to push it back off Hannibal’s face.

“If your hair was still long I’d be drowning in it right now.” Will chuckled. Hannibal smiled and Will could imagine the long, soft locks he’d had a few years earlier. He ran a hand through Hannibal’s hair. “Why did you cut it?”

Hannibal’s smile faltered for a moment and he rolled onto his back, pulling Will to him, and hugging him into his chest.

“I…” Hannibal cleared his throat.

“It’s ok, you don’t have to… I didn’t mean to pry.”

Hannibal gave an amused huff and looked at him. “Will, we share a bed, I want to share my life with you. How could you ever pry?”

Will found himself blushing and was glad when Hannibal continued to save him just babbling nonsense in return.

“You see the way that Frank skates? How he is styled? It’s a poor imitation of what you possess naturally. It is a trick for younger skaters, as you know. Before manhood creeps in, you can be both male and female to the audience, something in between, maybe neither. It changes perceptions and…” he trailed off and stared at the ceiling for a moment. “I had that tactic, it worked well for me. I didn’t feel it inside as you do, but it did - in a way - represent something to me. My parents had never been fully supportive of my skating, it was through the support of people at my local rink that I learned, that I was recommended to Jack. And when I was he helped style me, helped build my career. My parents did not approve. They…” he drew a long, deep breath and let it out slowly.

“It’s ok, you… you know you can tell me anything.” Will encouraged, moving so that his head rested on Hannibal’s chest but he looked up towards him.

Hannibal nodded and gave a sad smile. “I know. It is something in the past. Something I dealt with and moved on from, but it hurts no less to remember... My father thought I was soft, of course he meant gay, and he was right. But to them skating was something soft and they didn’t want me to be soft. When I started to let my hair grow out as Jack suggested, they were very unhappy. I had moved out by then, I earned enough money to live alone, even as a teenager. I tried to keep a relationship with them, but there was too much about me that was wrong for them - that I skated, the way I looked, who I loved. I… I tried to compromise, to reach out and change the one thing I could. So I cut my hair. Jack went crazy about at first, but I was older and although I was still slight enough to carry the ambiguity, playing on my adulthood and appeal turned out for the best. Either way, it wasn’t enough for my parents. They disowned me, and I…” Hannibal trailed off, refusing to look anywhere but the ceiling.

Will felt his chest and throat constrict with the pain he felt on Hannibal’s behalf. Something he had not had to go through with his parents. But he’d had his own struggles -

“I… I think the femininity you had when skating was part of what inspired me. I mean, all those years ago. So.. it may not have been to your parent’s liking but for me, and maybe a whole bunch of other people out there - you were an idol, an inspiration for those of us who

saw that in ourselves. You made us feel accepted and right. At least for me… I…” he trailed off and shrugged.

Hannibal leaned down and softly kissed him.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

The night before competition and Will really needs to relax. Hannibal is happy to help with that.

Sometimes you need a vacation, time away from your hectic everyday life where you can relax and be yourself. On the rare occasions where I do take time from skating - two L words come to mind. Life and Love. I've spent the last 20 years neglecting both of them.

Hannibal soaked in the expansive rooftop pool of the Barcelona hotel. It was night time, dark and cool despite the humidity. It suited him well for some alone time before Grand Prix competition started anew the next day. He remembered it well himself of course and wanted to give Will the chance to rest and have his own space. Even so, the temptation to intrude on that space when they shared a hotel room was almost too much.

"Hi, how's coach Hannibal doing?" Frederick Chilton's amused tone broke the silence. Hannibal turned to look up at him, in his swimwear and ready for the water. "And here I was hoping to go skinny dipping."

"Don't let me stop you." Hannibal grinned.

Because this wasn't really a vacation of course. This was the Grand Prix Figure Skating Final and the idea of being somewhere alone with Will was currently a distant dream. At least until the competition was over, and then the future stretched out before them… he hoped. Every day Will grew in confidence and Hannibal worried that he might wake one day and realise he no longer needed Hannibal as coach or lover. Though he knew the thought sold them both short so tried not to let his own insecurities at his lack of love get to him. Easier said than done.

Freddy was a reminder of quite how long he had known nothing else but skating one way or another. He had first met Freddy when he was a young and innocent boy - a fan in the audience of a competition, and now he couldn't imagine a skating season without him.

The waves sloshed around him as Freddy jumped into the pool. In the past they might have stayed there talking and swimming all night, but now Hannibal couldn't help but let his thoughts turn to Will again… in his bed - in their bed. No matter what insecurities his past gave him, it didn't stop him wanting to be in the man's constant company regardless of activity.

I've learned a lot over the last 8 months. Will's life and love have opened up a whole new world for me. One I never knew existed.

*

Love has changed me. I'm stronger now. And I'll prove it at the Finals with a gold medal.

Will woke, alone in the darkness of their room.

He *was* stronger. He knew that. A stronger skater, a stronger person. More himself than he had ever been. He had never known himself as well as he knew himself when he was with Hannibal. Even so, his nerves were finally catching him up in his dreams until he was so anxious about the final that sleep was driven from him. He was covered in a cold sweat that soaked through the sheets that twisted around him. Even the most confident and talented skater would be nervous he was sure.

"Where are you Hannibal? I need you." Will muttered, wishing he hadn't. Wishing he didn't. But the truth was he had come to rely on Hannibal being there for him and wondered what his life would hold once the season was over. He'd become accustomed to being loved by the man and didn't ever want that to end.

Will closed his eyes against the thoughts and anxieties he didn't need to face yet. There was no reason to believe that this would end when the season was over, no matter what his mind tried to tell him at times.

He sighed and got out of the bed, pulling the damp top sheets off with him and dropping them to the floor. He grabbed a spare blanket from the cupboard and threw that onto the bed before going to the bathroom and turning on the shower.

It hadn't been his intention, when he'd got in the shower, to get out and get dressed in anything other than sleepwear. But with his sweaty t-shirt and underwear discarded, and feeling fresh and clean, he couldn't help but reach for some of the underwear in his luggage. His cheeks burned as he did, glad he packed it at the same time as wondering why on earth he would. He was still getting used to expressing this side of himself and feeling comfortable with the comfort of it.

He pulled out the white cotton panties and matching bra. Unassuming and nothing gouche, but the feel of it was as luxurious as silk to him as he pulled them on. It eased his anxiety as he imagined wearing such things under his clothes, perhaps under his skating costumes, though he couldn't given how skin tight they were.

He was just happy to be able to express the feminine side of himself that needed to be allowed. He was happy to just be. Like this. Just be.

Will smiled with contentment as he went back to the bed and lay down. He had started to nod off again when the door was fumbled open in the dark and admitted two giggling figures - Hannibal and Fred Chilton.

Will sat up as the lights came on, startled as he looked at Hannibal. The three of them stared at each other for a moment and Will was somewhere between amused and concerned by the near lustful look in Freddy's eyes. They were both in nothing but swimming trunks and dripping wet.

“Change of plan.” Hannibal said without looking away from Will. “No nightcap tonight. Good night Frederick.” He turned and gave Fred a light shove until he was back over the threshold and closed the door soundly in his wake.

When he looked back to Will, he licked his lips and breathed out Will’s name with no little reverence. “You look beautiful.”

Will laughed lightly, amused by the entire turn of events. “You always say that.”

“I’ve never found it to not be true.” Hannibal countered as he started towards the bed.

“I’m glad you’re back… I was… I don’t think I’ll be able to sleep tonight. I’m too nervous.”

“No?” Hannibal grinned and Will laughed as he watched the man try to school his expression into something more caring even as the lust remained.

“No… not at all.” Will quirked a brow and raised his arms to invite Hannibal to him.

He went. Wet as he was, dripping chlorinated pool water on both Will and the bed as Will giggled and pressed kisses across damp skin. Surely this would be the best sort of stress relief?

Hannibal moved down in his embrace until he was almost out of reach, lacing kisses of his own and then mouth at Will’s hard cock through the white cotton. They both moaned and Hannibal took as much of Will into his mouth as he could without pulling the panties aside.

Will groaned and arched up. “God… Hannibal. I want… I want to be inside you.”

Hannibal was flushed, panting - with eyes blown wide with lust - as he pulled back. “I want that too. I really want that.”

Hannibal pulled off his trunks, letting them thud wet to the floor as he moved off the bed to their bags on the side. He grabbed a hand towel, the lube and a condom, dropping the little packet onto the bed before opening the lube and squeezing it onto his fingers.

“How… What, how would prefer? I really want you to bend me over the... but… if you would prefer…” Hannibal was clearly distracted as he started to push his lubed fingers against himself.

Will went so red he felt his face burning hot at the realisation of what Hannibal was talking about. “I thought… I thought you meant your mouth.” Will couldn’t help but end the words with a laugh, a hand over his eyes to hide his embarrassment.

“Oh.” Hannibal stopped and looked unsure despite, or maybe because of Will’s clear amusement. “I… I meant… Don’t you… I can. But… I wanted you to fuck me.”

Will understood Hannibal and the words stopped his laughter and his breathing. “I… I’ve never…” His chest was suddenly tight with nerves.

“I can show you.” Hannibal replied so gently that Will couldn’t help but melt and nod as Hannibal continued - “if you would like me to?”

*

Will’s nerves over the skate were forgotten, replaced completely by nerves over the situation at hand. He had never done this before and he didn’t want to disappoint Hannibal, or hurt him or-

“You’re thinking too much Will. I can see your brain ticking over.” Hannibal cooed and leaned in to kiss him.

They were kneeling on the bed, facing each other as Hannibal reached out and tentatively touched Will’s lips. Will sighed against his fingers and nodded. He was, he really was overthinking it, he knew.

“Trust me to guide you, ok?” Hannibal asked, not waiting for Will’s nod as he pulled his hand away and repositioned himself on his back. Will just knelt there, awed as Hannibal lay back and applied more lube to his fingers before working them against himself. “Kiss me Will.”

Will let out a shuddering breath before moving down and pressing against Hannibal’s side, nuzzling into his throat and then across to his lips as he tentatively reached a hand down for Hannibal’s cock. Taking it in hand, squeezing it reassuringly and stroking it a few slow and long pulls - feeling comforted by the familiarity of it before Hannibal took his hand and moved it lower. Will’s breath shook again.

“Here.” Hannibal said, his own voice now with a tremor as he guided Will’s fingers to his slicked entrance.

Will felt Hannibal move and then he was passing him the lube. Will was nodding over and over as he took the lube and poured some onto his own fingers, repositioning himself slightly for better reach. Then Hannibal was guiding him again and he felt one of Hannibal’s fingers slip inside as he began to circle the unfamiliar area.

“Press your finger into me, Will.” Hannibal gave the breathy instruction. Will shifted again, his brassiered chest rubbing against Hannibal and causing a pleasant friction across his nipples that made his cock jump. He gave a little whine at the sensation before he too pressed in, slipping his finger along side Hannibal’s.

Hannibal groaned and clenched a moment around their fingers. Will froze.

“It’s alright. It’s nice… keep going. Like this.” Hannibal started to move his finger, pumping it slowly in and out and stretching himself on each stroke. Will mirrored the movement and then, on impulse and instinct, added another finger. His two alongside Hannibal’s made a tight fit and Hannibal arched a little.

“Is that ok?” Will asked nervously.

“Y-yes… nnnggg….” Hannibal pressed back on their fingers and Will bit his lower lip, looking down at Hannibal’s blissed out face and knowing he must look the same when Hannibal was inside him.

They moved their fingers, slow but firm until Hannibal removed his and asked Will to add his own. Will’s breath shook and came in breathy pants as he pressed three of his fingers inside Hannibal and began to stretch him in the way he himself had been stretched before.

“Oh… Will… You are so beautiful… you really are!” Hannibal mumbled, using his un-lubed hand to grab behind Will’s neck and pull him into a kiss. As their lips met his hand released Will and snaked to his shoulder, lowering one bra strap before he pulled back and placed kisses over Will’s shoulder. “So utterly beautiful… please, please take me you beautiful creature.”

Will shook as he removed his fingers and sat back, getting up on his knees again and out of Hannibal’s reach, in order to wipe his hand on the towel and locate the condom. He fumbled with it as Hannibal rolled onto his belly and pulled up his hips.

The sight made Will drop the packet. He reclaimed it and fumbled some more before managing to get it open. He pushed his panties down a little, hooking them under his balls so that his cock stood free and leaking. He bit his lip and rolled the condom on before lubing himself thoroughly - working his hand up and down as Hannibal prostrated before him.

Moving behind Hannibal happened in a blur, not quickly, but completely wiped from his mind as he lined himself up. Only the feel of Hannibal’s entrance giving slightly to the press of his cockhead consumed his thoughts now. He was shaking with mixed nerves and excitement at the overwhelming tightness as he slowly pushed in.

He whimpered and moaned - a mirror to Hannibal’s gasps and groans - working together with Will pressing slowly in. Inch by inch, in and out until he could work further each time, with Hannibal pressing back greedily until Will was flush against him.

He moved slowly then, savouring the feel of being inside Hannibal, as his hands clutched at Hannibal’s hips and held him steady.

Hannibal said nothing, other than continued huffs of pleasure, but true to his word he guided Will - pushing back or changing the angle, so that Will just had to follow his lead. Like they were dancing together or skating doubles - moving their bodies perfectly to compliment the other.

When Hannibal began pushing back on him with each thrust, Will took that as he knew it was meant and began to thrust harder, deeper, quicker. Still far from frenzied he was already getting so close. So very close.

“Han-Hannibal, I won’t last… much…” he managed to pant out as he continued to thrust. He pushed himself flat against Hannibal’s back, moaning as he felt again the way his bra was caught between their sweaty flesh. “Oh… ah… I’m… I’m gonna…”

The sensation was all too much and Will felt his balls draw up. He thrust fast and erratic, Hannibal groaning and panting, reaching back for him until his hand tangled in Will's panties and tried to pull him closer, deeper.

"Please Will… I want you to-"

Will cried out and came, losing himself completely to the automatic movement of his hips as they continued to snap back and forth, spilling all he could within Hannibal's tight heat.

He was moving up then, pulling back on his knees, an arm around Hannibal's waist as he took him with him, so that they both sat back with Hannibal in Will's lap. Will continued shallow thrusts through the aftershocks of his orgasm, unable to do more if he wanted to, with Hannibal sat in his lap and pressed back against him. Friction against his chest again as Hannibal's back rubbed against the bra and sent little shocks of pleasure through his nipples - almost overwhelming in his current state.

Hannibal's head fell back on Will's shoulder as Will's free hand took hold of Hannibal's cock. He stroked it hard and long, paying attention to the head with his still sticky lubed fingers, circling fingers and gathering pre-cum to mix with the moisture. Then he pumped Hannibal as firm and as fucked him, until the man was crying out - hand clenching where it remained at Will's ass and upper thigh, caught in his panties.

Will savoured the renewed tightness around him as Hannibal came and they both shook and trembled and continued leisurely movements as they rode out the pleasure together.

*

Hannibal ached in the most pleasant of ways.

They had stayed together for minutes, maybe hours, before they pulled apart and Will disposed of the condom. He had brought a cloth from the adjoining bathroom and cleaned Hannibal and then himself before they lay back in the bed.

He had, Hannibal noticed, also righted his underwear again. Not removed it despite the light soiling of cum and lube on the panties.

When Will relaxed onto the bed, Hannibal pushed him to his back and lay over him.

"Sleepy now?"

"I'm exhausted." Will chuckled. "But no… not at all. I'm wide awake now."

Hannibal smiled. It was good to see that, despite being tired, Will seemed to have lost his anxiety. Even if the man didn't sleep, Hannibal was determined to keep that niggling anxiety at bay for the rest of the night.

"Well, in that case…" Hannibal purred and moved down. He smoothed a hand lightly over the cup of Will's bra, feeling the nipple beneath harden at his touch. That drew a breathy gasp and Will closed his eyes, teeth working his bottom lip as he enjoyed the sensation. Hannibal

grinned before leaning over and sucking at the nipple through the fabric, causing Will to arch up.

Hannibal hummed against Will, one hand kneading and pinching at his other nipple as he pulled the cup down and ran his tongue over and around the exposed nub until Will was writhing.

As long as it kept the anxiety at bay, Hannibal resolved to spend the rest of the night doing all he could to make Will cum with only the work of his tongue.

The wonderful TCBook made some art of Will in lingerie!

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Practice is in full swing but that's not going to get in the way of some shopping, misunderstandings and revelations!

Chapter Notes

I guess from this chapter, and the previous chapter, I have now gone off canon from YOI. This will have a different ending to YOI based on the story that has unfolded her as the context and focus is very different - so ending the exact same way as YOI wouldn't fit this story. Hope you all like it!

Will had thrown himself into practice with as much enthusiasm as he had the previous evening's love making. Despite how clearly exhausted he was. Hannibal smiled as he watched Will push himself with determination.

"You should probably take it easy, get a good night's sleep tonight before the short programme tomorrow." Hannibal said as Will's practice ended and he joined him at rinkside.

Will chuckled and shook his head as he caught his breath. "Don't go turning into a model coach on me now. You've been here before, take me sightseeing, it's the least you owe me after keeping me up all night." Will's tone was so cheeky, Hannibal half expected him to wink. Beautiful, confident Will.

"Your wish is my command." Hannibal smirked and licked his lips, drawing a mirroring smirk from Will that made him want to bed the man again as soon as realistically possible.

As it was, Hannibal wasn't quite sure how they managed to get showered and dressed and ready for the town without getting sidetracked. It wasn't for want of trying on his side as he offered to shower with Will to help him soap up; offered to help him dry when he was rebuffed; and had kisses rejected all the while. Will laughed, determined not to be sidetracked, at least not until later - his smile promised.

When they got out onto the streets Will was beautiful to watch in his excitement of discovering new things. They strolled passed some of Gaudi's beautiful designs and Will blushed when Hannibal wanted to take their picture in front of the Sagrada Família - he wasn't exactly one for selfies.

Will looked so happy, Hannibal just wanted to bask in it. He wanted to be part of it. He wanted to make Will happy forever.

Hannibal had considered this for a while, and took Will's hands, drawing the man to him as they stood outside an unimposing shopfront.

"This tailor is very good, I've had many suits made by them. Would you permit me… Will, I'd… I'd like to buy you a suit." Hannibal started and when he saw Will go to object, he continued quickly - "they tailor for women too… I was thinking… I…"

Will's face brightened and he gave a little nod as his cheeks flushed. The sight filled Hannibal with warmth and he opened the door.

They took the few short steps down into the small but elegantly furnished room, filled with some of the best fabrics in Spain, Hannibal knew. He'd had several suits made here over the years and was always delighted to be attended by the owner, and excellent tailor Señor Gumb.

"Señor Lecter, a pleasure! A pleasure!" The man in question stepped from behind his work station and shook Hannibal's hand with passion. "It is good to see you again, I noticed you are not in the competition this year so I didn't know that you would be here."

"I'm coaching now Señor." Hannibal smiled. "This is Will Graham, he's competing and I'm here as his coach. I thought you might have time to measure him for a suit?" Hannibal asked, knowing the man was unlikely to refuse the custom.

Gumb let go of Hannibal's hand and took a step back to appraise Will, who now shuffled a little nervously. The unusual situation bringing out some of his anxieties once more.

"Hmm. I think…" Gumb looked him up and down. "A cut that is something more feminine? I think that would suit your energy."

Gumb looked up at Will who beamed a smile and nodded, any nervousness now gone, which had Hannibal smiling too. Then Gumb stepped forward again and snatched up Will's hand, shaking it enthusiastically.

"A pleasure Señor Graham. Perhaps you will win gold eh? And then I can say, that gold medal winner wears one of my suits as I do for Señor Lecter."

Will was still grinning but there was definitely a little blush as he nodded. "I… I hope so Señor."

Gumb laughed with delight and dropped Will's hand, turning on his heel and beckoning them. "Come, come, we will measure out the back, somewhere more fitting."

Will glanced at Hannibal and he could do nothing but smile reassuringly, knowing that the smile also conveyed his adoration whether he intended it to or not. They followed Gumb through a heavy curtain and into a larger backroom. More materials, various sewing machines and other equipments, tools and supplies. And at the back several adjustable

mannequins, each hung with perfectly fitting clothes in different stages of completion. The two on the end drew Hannibal's eye immediately and could see they drew Will's as well.

Two mannequins that were clearly male as the rest, but on them, just as perfectly fitted, were feminine style clothes. One almost complete and the other little more than a pattern of flesh coloured paper pinned together, and even then the feminine shape was clear.

"You are an artist Señor Gumb." Hannibal practically gushed, utterly spellbound by the enchanted look on Will's face.

"It is kind of you to say so, Señor. Very kind." Gumb smiled as he took the tape measure from his pocket and beckoned Will to him.

*

Will might have felt overwhelmed had he not been so elated.

The suit measuring had been quick, but they had then taken more than an hour discussing styles and cuts and Señor Gumb sketching something that Will had to consider absolutely perfection. A undoubtedly men's suit, but with such subtle tailoring that made it seem at the same time feminine whilst clearly not female. It sort of reminded Will of the New Romantics without being so overstated.

Will had wanted to cry, or scream or just somehow get this overwhelming emotion out of his body as it threatened to crack open his chest and spill out happiness into the world.

Hannibal seemed to sense that he was struggling and needed a break, because once the design was complete, he suggested Will go do some shopping and sightseeing alone whilst Señor Gumb designed something new for Hannibal too.

Will had nodded mutely, trying to express his thanks in his smile before he had headed back out onto the street to collect himself.

It was starting to get late but many shops were still open and Will couldn't help but think of finding a gift he could get Hannibal in return. He had been so bowled over by the idea of the suit that he hadn't even thought to refuse the gift. But it was so much, too much, and he just couldn't let Hannibal spend that sort of money on him. Or, he wouldn't if he hadn't quickly developed an absolute need for that suit. A desire only outweighed by his desire for Hannibal himself and to win the competition.

So he needed to get Hannibal *something*. A gift that Hannibal would like. Something he would love and treasure. He knew the cost was nothing to Hannibal, an expensive gift was meaningless unless it actually *had* meaning.

But he had no idea what that might be.

Until he passed one shop window.

*

Will let out a soft sigh as strong arms slipped around him and he felt Hannibal pull him back against his chest. They stood on the steps of Barcelona Cathedral, where they had agreed to meet.

“Hello.” Hannibal muttered softly into Will’s ear and Will felt like melting back into him. As it was he closed his eyes and making a silent wish that they were back in the hotel room.

When he reopened his eyes he found they hadn’t moved and he finally let out a belated - “Hi” which made Hannibal chuckle against him.

Hannibal let his hands fall away and Will turned to him with a smile. “Thank you Hannibal, for today. And the suit, I… I don’t know how to thank you.”

“You don’t need to thank me Will.” Hannibal smiled at him so disarmingly that Will just wanted to melt again, be a puddle in Barcelona until the end of time. He didn’t want this time they’d had together to ever end no matter what happened when the competition was over.

“I… I bought you a… I wanted to…” Will fidgeted, nervous again as he lifted the small bag, taking out of it a ring box. His hands shook as he opened it and offered it to Hannibal, the glint of gold reflected in Hannibal’s widening eyes. Will cleared his throat as his heart thundered in his chest. He lifted his own right hand and showed Hannibal the matching gold band that sat on his ring finger. “A lucky charm for me, a present for you. Thank you Hannibal, for everything you’ve done.” Hannibal seemed stunned into silence and Will thought for a moment he might refuse the gift. “Say something?” Will asked quietly.

Hannibal took the box, and pulled the ring from it, sliding it onto his finger before setting the box in his pocket. He looked deeply into Will’s eyes and took hold of Will’s hand, lifting it to his lips and kissing the ring on his finger. A slow press as his eyes fluttered shut and Will had to hold back a soft sob when emotion lodged in his chest.

“This is the only gold that matters.” Hannibal muttered against his hand.

Will felt the anxiety bleed from him and he laughed lightly with relief. And added thoughtfully and with some humour - “I’d still like the gold medal though.”

Hannibal smiled then, widening to a grin as he lowered Will’s hand but kept firm hold of it. He leaned in and pressed their foreheads together before speaking low and gentle -

“Tomorrow, skate in a way that’s true to yourself. There’s only one way to a gold medal that I know, and that’s it. Let them see you, Will. Let them see what I see.”

*

Will hadn’t even considered dinner, he was much too preoccupied with getting back to the hotel with Hannibal and seeing how the man would look naked but for the gold band. He didn’t even hear Freddy at first when the man called to them from outside a bustling restaurant with several other skaters.

It was Hannibal that stopped and waved back to them.

“Join us for dinner.” Freddy called to them before heading into the restaurant, they got a small wave and smile from Peter and a scowl from Frank as they headed in after Freddy.

Hannibal looked to Will with a questioning glance.

“Well… I guess I am hungry.” Will smiled.

When they got in they saw that Frank, Freddy, Peter and Tobias had already grabbed a large table and started ordering drinks. There was laughter and chattering as they approached and Will was struck by how strange it was to him. He had known some of these people awhile, Peter especially of course, but he had never thought of them as a group like this before. Always too caught up in competition. He wondered if they had always socialised outside of the competitions like this. His mind was filled with images of the previous year - imagining this scene back then but with Hannibal already part of the merriment and himself quietly sat in his room getting ever more anxious about the skate.

They sat and ordered drinks and a spread of tapas before conversation began in earnest. Laughter and jokes as it alternated between whole group conversations and some breaking off into twos or threes before rejoining. There was something pleasantly comforting about it, a sense of belonging Will had never thought to seek out before. He was one of them and felt a fool for having not socialised like this before. He remembered all the missed opportunities to talk to any and all of them - and especially Hannibal. He would have never had the nerve to approach him before, it was so hard to believe the relationship they had developed since then.

He sighed and leaned against Hannibal, muttering quietly to him - “This is so different from last year. I was all alone then, even at the banquet. I… I wish I’d had the courage to talk to you.”

Will remembered the banquet well - how he had felt. The banquet party was held at the end of each season for skaters to relax and socialise once the competition was over. Will had been dragged to the banquet by his coach after having a crushing defeat. He had no wish to be there and had spent the evening alone drinking champagne.

“Are you… are you seriously telling me you don’t remember?” Hannibal spoke in a clearly shocked tone that drew the attention of the others at the table. “You… you don’t remember the banquet.” Will was surprised by the initial shock and then Hannibal’s cheeks reddening with a blush. He had never before seen Hannibal look so uncertain and maybe even somewhat embarrassed.

Will frowned, about to ask what Hannibal was talking about when an equally shocked tone came from Freddy - “At the banquet you got wasted on champagne and started dancing. Everyone was watching.”

“It was the most disgusting thing I’ve ever seen.” Frank spat the words out with a grimace.

Oh my god. What?

Will’s heart was suddenly beating at twice the speed and he felt his face burn all the way to the tips of his ears. He cursed the champagne - it had always had a bad effect on him and

though he had tried not to drink too much, he had been so nervous at being at the banquet… he must have lost count…

He sat in stunned silence then as everyone at the table started to pull out their phones, all scrolling through with smiles before finding what they sought. Peter was the first, but soon they all started to pass their phones around to each other, comparing the masses of photos and videos they all seemed to be in possession of. Will's face continued to burn and he wanted desperately to see what the hell he'd gotten up to that night, at the same time as not wanting to in equal measure.

Hannibal revived from the shock he seemed to be in and reached for his own phone. The thought of Hannibal having seen him in such a state that he couldn't even imagine from the renewed chattering and laughter at the table, made him ache inside with embarrassment.

As Hannibal went to lift his own phone Will moved to stop him - the thought of Hannibal having photos of him in a drunken state unsettled him. Both of their right hands together and holding the phone between. Before either could make another move Freddy spoke with a somewhat sleazy if teasing tone -

"So… what are these rings you are wearing?" His grin was at their expense.

Peter gasped and then began to gush. "Oh my god!!! Congratulations on your marriage!" Before either Will or Hannibal could respond, Peter turned to the restaurant and announced excitedly. "Everybody, my good friend here just got married!"

"No, no that's not… um, no…" Will started to protest quietly as diners around them applauded and raised glasses. He starting to wonder if he might actually catch fire if his face became any redder.

Will was grateful then for Hannibal clasping hold of his hand and replying calmly - "He's right" His tone turned teasing as he turned to Will with a grin. "It's just an engagement ring. We'll get married when he wins the gold medal, right Will?"

"W-what did you just say?" Will felt panic wash over him. That was what he had meant with the rings wasn't it? A promise for the future, an expression of his desire for them to stay together… but marriage? Hannibal squeezed his hand reassuringly but that did little for Will's anxiety. This was all so much, too much for the night before competition.

Thankfully then the table erupted into playful banter over who would win - each making a case and a claim and one person - Will wasn't focused enough to make out who - joked that Hannibal would still win it despite not competing.

As the chatter picked up and laughter once more took over, Hannibal quietly ushered Will from the restaurant. Maybe he really did need to get a good night sleep before the competition.

*

It was quiet and peaceful, that early time before the city really woke. Hannibal had left Will sleeping and gone down to the beach, watching his ring glint in the morning sun as the sea did.

Marriage? It wasn't something he had ever thought about, but now. Now there was Will and despite them clearly having drastically different memories of the banquet the year before, he wasn't sure he could live without him. A year ago Hannibal would have been unable to predict any of this.

He had taken time from skating because he wasn't sure he could surprise anyone anymore. He didn't want to keep skating just for the sake of it and coaching Will had been a diversion from that. But it had become so much more...

If the banquet had never happened, he would never have had the chance to know the quiet and beautiful man he had watched from afar. If that video of Will skating his routine had never been posted he would have never taken it as a reminder and an invitation, never been spurred on to go to Will.

He would have never fallen in love.

*

One Year Ago

Hannibal tried not to watch at first. He found Will Graham mesmerising to watch on the ice, and his dancing was no different. How the man could remain so graceful whilst clearly drunk off his ass was a mystery to him. Something about Will, the joy he held inside him, was compelling to Hannibal and it felt like watching him would make his curiosity obvious.

By the time Will and some of the others - mostly not as drunk as Will but happily urging him on and joining in themselves - were half naked and pole dancing, Hannibal was unable to stop openly staring.

His mind reeled through many questions: had Will taken ballet class as his poise suggested?; where had that pole even come from?; and how was such a creature as beautiful as Will Graham even possible?

Hannibal was totally caught off guard when Will sauntered towards him and then threw himself into Hannibal's arms. It was a dance, of sorts, with Will mostly grinding against him in a way that made Hannibal nearly lose the cool control he so proudly maintained. He never joined in with this sort of revelry - in the early years because Jack wanted him to maintain the cool distance from his rivals, and later because the distance had been achieved and they were perhaps too intimidated to invite him. Will Graham, apparently, had no such compunction and it was more than a little refreshing.

For the first time in a very long time, Hannibal just felt like one of them, not someone aloof and removed from them.

“Hannibal,” Will’s words were breathy and little slurred. “My family owns a hot tub hotel. When the season is over you should come visit.” He was practically hanging drunk off of Hannibal when he continued. “Hey, I’ve got an idea! If I win this dance off - come to Hasetsu and be my coach!”

Hannibal had no words. A moment later Will stumbled back towards the others. And he did indeed win the dance off.

Something bloomed in Hannibal’s chest for the first time since childhood.

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Win or lose, we call everything on the ice - love.

Hannibal waited with baited breath. In fact his palms were sweaty and he fidgeted with his gloves, wondering whether to pull them off. His hands had never been so hot this close to the ice before. But as he stood rinkside waiting for Will to emerge, he thought he might burn up entirely.

He wasn't just nervous on Will's behalf - more nervous than he had ever been for himself before a skate - he was anxious to see Will's new costume in action. He had seen it before of course, laid out on the bed, and on Will himself in their hotel room. But on the ice, he knew it would be something else - something utterly glorious to behold.

He was so caught up in the thought that he barely registered Will until he was almost upon him, and even then it was the gasps and hushed comments that drew Hannibal's attention first. He looked up and saw Will, people rinkside wide-eyed and awed in his wake. Such a reaction, he knew, might normally have had Will anxious, his cheeks burning and clear signs of distress. But this wasn't the case. Wearing the costume seemed to have given him a confidence Hannibal had only seen in private. It brought out the true Will for everyone to see.

Hannibal smiled, realising how unnecessarily he had worried on Will's behalf.

Everyone around them clearly noted the change, their continued stares seemed to linger on Will as they softly muttered more so about how confident he seemed, rather than just the costume.

The exquisite costume that was so very Will.

The design was perfect. It couldn't be mistaken for a woman's costume - clearly masculine, it merely drew on some feminine elements to blend the genders together in a natural and beautiful way.

It was the colour of blood. Which was to say a deep red, deepening all the way to black in places. The brightest red at Will's chest in an almost heart like pattern, radiating further and further out into darkness until it was nothing but black at the extremities.

It seemed to take an age for Will to reach him, but Hannibal knew it was only that his heart had slowed time itself to drink in the sight completely.

"And here is Will Graham!" The announcer began. "With Hannibal Lecter as his coach he will true to prove the power of love by bringing home a gold medal." There was a jovial note

in the announcers tone. Not sarcastic or teasing, but genuinely supportive.

The announcers mike must have still been open because everyone heard the gasp that echoed around the stadium and was joined by many others, when Will reached him and Hannibal took his hand and pulled it up to his lips. He kissed softly the ring and knuckles, before drawing Will closer and kissing him lightly on the lips. There was murmuring around them and in the crowd, and more than a few cheers.

This is the only gold that matters.

He wondered if he thought it loud enough the words would be known without him having to say them. He had said them before but Will hadn't seemed to register them, or hadn't perhaps taken their meaning - especially in consideration for how he had reacted to Hannibal's interpretation of them as engagement rings. Holding onto this glorious creature who had shown him what life could be with love in it - a lesson his family had never taught him - seemed impossible.

Instead of the words he wanted to say, Hannibal leaned in and whispered. "I'm watching you Will, I see you. My eros."

Will looked determined. Brimming with the sort of confidence love could give you. Maybe Will wanted to be held onto? Maybe he would let Hannibal keep him?

Just as he thought it, Will slipped from his fingers and onto the ice. A reminder that the ice was the true love of his life. Hannibal knew. He had felt the same. Still did. If he could just have them both he would be happy. Will and the ice.

Hannibal watched then. Awed as realisation hit only a few moments in. Will had changed his skate, he had upped to jumps with a higher difficulty in order to get the points he needed to win. As long as he could land them!

He had to land the quad flip. He could land the quad flip!

Hannibal's mouth was dry and his heart racing.

Will's grown, he doesn't doubt his decisions anymore. I know he can do this - but that doesn't change the fact that my heart is about to explode.

Triple axel. Quadruple jump combination and… landed.

Hannibal wasn't sure when he stopped breathing, only that his chest was now so tight that the fated explosion might actually be imminent.

This was it, he knew. Will was going to win.

And a wave of fear like he had never known washed over him. Will was about to reach his peak and then no matter what he did after - continue or retire - he no longer needed Hannibal. Hannibal had helped him find the confidence to be himself, but it was Will that would win. Will that would continue on or not with that confidence.

Will had faltered so at the idea of their rings as a promise of marriage.

Where did that leave Hannibal?

When he had been lost and uncertain of his future he had found one in Will. Before Will even recalled, as it turned out. That night at the banquet he had silently accepted Will's invitation - seeing it as a way forward for that moment. But the moment was soon to be over and Hannibal feared being lost again. Lost, and this time alone.

The cheers of the crowd brought him back from his thoughts.

"Will Graham, in an astounding skate, has broken the record previously set by his coach, Hannibal Lecter!" the commentator sounded awed. And Hannibal could understand it.

Will Graham was astounding. And he was going to win.

*

When they got back to the hotel room, Will instantly flopped back onto the bed - an obvious mixture of elation and exhaustion. He took in a deep breath and sighed out a light laugh.

"I never thought… I mean, I hoped and I knew I skated well, but I just never thought I'd score that high." Will looked up at him fondly as he spoke and Hannibal returned the soft smile.

"I knew you could do it." He did, of course. He was so proud he could burst, but it still felt like there was something hanging over them, dampening the moment.

There was a silence then and Will's smile faltered before he reached up a hand to Hannibal.

"Dance with me?" He asked, with a little blush in his cheeks.

Hannibal took his hand without hesitation and pulled him up and into an embrace. They had never really danced before - he was sure he couldn't count the drunken gyrating from the banquet - though he smiled at the thought. At how far they had come and might never have done had Will not been drunk that night.

They swayed gently, slowly but surely adding more movements until Hannibal was twirling and dipping Will in the silent room. It broke whatever was inside Hannibal that was holding back - that fear for the worst, of being alone again, and he laughed.

After a few minutes they were breathless and went back to swaying in each other's embrace, Will's breath hot on the side of his neck.

"After the final let's end this. It's the best I've ever skated, I want to go out on a high." Will said. There was no discernable emotion in his voice and Hannibal stilled. After a deep breath he pulled back to look at him.

"End this?" He asked, terrified. He knew, he really knew in his heart, that he had not been a means to an end for Will. Someone to boost his confidence who could now be discarded. But

he also was still unsure whether he had correctly interpreted the gesture of the rings or not. He tried to fight back the emotion that threatened to quaver his voice as he replied “it… it’s your decision…”

Will frowned at him. “Are you upset? It is my choice and I choose to retire. Do you… Don’t you want to be with me if I’m not skating?” The words ended with a hesitant tremor.

“Retiring? I thought you meant…” He wasn’t sure where he stood now at all. Did Will want to be with him if neither of them were skating? Hadn’t that been the arrangement? Hadn’t that been why he had been concerned about Will winning? Because he knew if Will won then he had no reason to come back and try again, no need to keep Hannibal around as his coach. He could retire on a high, just as he was planning now.

“I… This way you can make your comeback.” Will ventured. “And you won’t need to worry about me getting in the way.”

Hannibal stopped his whirring mind then. It felt like they were having two different conversations.

“I don’t want us to break up.” Hannibal blurted before he had chance to check his emotions in his usual manner.

Will looked momentarily panicked. “Break up? I don’t want that. Why would we break up?” His eyes glistened with a sudden wetness.

“When you retire you won’t need me.” Hannibal said.

“Han-Hannibal, I will always need you.” Will replied softly, stuttering over the words as though he was expecting rejection.

Relief flooded through Hannibal and he pulled Will tight to him again.

“I wish you wouldn’t retire, you have so much more to give even if you win this year… When you win.” Hannibal corrected and smiled at Will’s chuckle.

“We can’t all win year after year like some people.”

Hannibal smiled at that. He had resisted admitting, either aloud or to himself, that he missed it. That coaching wasn’t the same as much as he enjoyed being around Will. But where could he go with it? And did he really want to? With Will he had found something he had never sought, but that had given him a meaning beyond skating. If the price of being at the top was total and lonely dedication, he wasn’t sure he could do that.

It was easy enough to surprise everyone when I approached each programme like a new beginning. But constantly starting over means never building anything solid. I don’t need anyone, I’m strongest on my own… at least, that’s what I thought.

Hannibal pulled back. He needed to know. They had already declared their love, shared so much, but was it more? He would be alone forever if he couldn’t be with Will. He had never truly understood what loneliness was before him, and had no desire to return to it.

“Was this a promise, Will?” He asked quietly, taking Will’s hand in his and bringing both their rings up until they caught the bright light of the hotel room.

“A promise?” Will looked nervous and shifted a little.

“You… You said it was a gift, but I made an assumption and I fear it may have been wrong. But I need to know.”

“Oh… oh!” Will’s eyes went wide at the realisation. “When you said it was the only gold that matters… I thought… I thought you were just thanking me. I… I didn’t realise…”

Hannibal was taken aback by the surprise and concern in Will’s expression. He seemed to have misjudged it all so badly. “It’s ok Will, it’s alright. Please… It’s my fault to make the assumption. I hope nothing between us changes? Maybe one day there can be more but if this is all for now, I’ll take it.”

“Oh, I…” Will stuttered over the words and his face became red with anxiety and embarrassment. Hannibal decided to save him from any further by pulling him close once more and letting him hide his face in the crook of Hannibal’s neck.

“Please Will, forgive me my assumptions.”

Will took a shaky breath and let it out, relaxing against Hannibal as he did so. “I… I can understand why you… I’m sorry. I…” he stopped himself saying more and Hannibal didn’t want to invite further words on the subject. As long he still had Will, there could be more later, a promise in the future.

As long as he still had Will.

He wanted to ask, to gauge any damage he had done in his inexperience of love. But Will saved him -

“Take me dancing Hannibal? I have so much energy left over from the skate and I don’t think I will sleep at all. Can we go dancing?” He pulled back and looked at Hannibal with a playful grin. “Please coach?”

Hannibal’s heart soared and he replied softly - “Anything Will, anything.”

*

It had been such a long time since Will had danced beyond the ballet studio. And he found he was missing even that - it felt like an extension of what he did on the ice and right now if he could skate all day, every day, he would - such joy it brought him. And so soon it would be over, maybe forever - at least professionally. And if he could have anything in that moment, it was to share that joy with Hannibal. To dance together.

Even so, Will hadn’t known what to expect when he had asked Hannibal to take him dancing - working on the assumption that Hannibal knew of local clubs or other venues for such things. It was only as the taxi dropped them outside a swanky members only club that reality hit.

Not just that, of course, this was where they would end up - but also, this was who Hannibal was. Wealthy, used to the finer things, members only.

Will hesitated at the door and didn't feel at all reassured as Hannibal's arm curled around his waist and pulled him close.

"Everything alright Will? We can go somewhere else?" Concern clear in Hannibal's tone.

"No, no." Will smiled and shook his head. "I'm just… I forget that... It doesn't matter."

Hannibal frowned and stopped, turning so that he faced Will. "I… I have money. Is that a problem for you?" Hannibal asked, cautiously, clearly anxious about the answer.

Will smiled reassuringly and shook his head. He had wanted to say that it did, but did it really? Why should it? Why should he feel any differently for Hannibal? He always knew the man had made a success of his career both on and off the ice in terms of sponsorship and merchandise.

Yes, Will didn't have a lot of money, and certainly wasn't used to members only clubs. But wouldn't he be devastated if Hannibal found fault with that?

"This looks nice." Will said, appraising the club's ornate exterior. "Just… just as long as you let me pay for a cheap round and are happy with the fact I'll likely embarrass you and stand on your feet."

Hannibal's relief was clear in his amused chuckle. "You could never embarrass me Will." He replied before leaning in and kissing him.

They had a small bite to eat and mostly water given that the competition continued in the morning. And they danced. Will only stepped on Hannibal's foot once - during their first dance, through sheer anxiety. Because the truth was they moved perfectly together. It had only been the stares and whispers of recognition that had put Will off and made him stumble.

Will felt a sort of peace and joy, dancing in Hannibal's arms - that he usually only felt on the ice, or maybe when fishing. He didn't even notice the passing of time, and it was only when Hannibal finally stopped at the end of one song - having previously just swayed with Will into the next - that Will realised how late it had become.

"It's ok, we can keep going." Will shrugged. "I don't think I'll be able to sleep tonight."

"That may be, but if we don't stop dancing I'm not sure your feet will be able to cope tomorrow." Hannibal smiled gently.

Will realised the truth in his words - any longer and his feet might start to ache. He grinned back at Hannibal. "Yes coach."

Hannibal pulled him close at that, a raised eyebrow at his cheekiness. "Though… if you're not planning on sleeping, perhaps there is something else we can do to tire you out."

Will let out a shaky breath at the immediate thought of the previous night.

“Hannibal!” He admonished as he felt his cheeks burn and his cock twitch. He wasn’t sure he’d ever get used to being with someone in public - innuendo, flirting, displays of affection.

“Will?” A cheeky retort, as though he didn’t know the reaction he had caused. Even so, a moment later the look gave way to something else - a slip of control as Hannibal was unable to hold back his own desires.

“Let’s… go back to the hotel.” Will laughed.

*

Hannibal walked slightly behind Will as they headed for their room. His delicate and yet firm body, even in clothes, was a sight to behold. But the truth was Hannibal had been imagining him out of those clothes since they had left the club.

No, he allowed. That wasn’t true. It had been since they had begun dancing.

They moved together with an effortless grace that Hannibal had never had with anyone before, and never would have assumed from their one previous *dance*. The banquet, and Will’s drunken grinding against him that had sparked something he had been unsure of at the time. But now he was sure, and now it was stronger and almost tangible. It had been a fond regard, an admiration but now it was love and lust and deep emotions that Hannibal had had little need to explore in the past. But now he wanted to with Will. He wanted to explore everything with Will.

The thought made his chest tighten and he surged forward, ensconcing himself at Will’s back. Will stopped for a moment, surprised by Hannibal hugging into him in the corridor outside their room. And then he gasped and moaned, and let his head drop back on Hannibal’s shoulder as he clearly felt Hannibal growing hard against him.

Hannibal leaned in and took Will’s mouth, kissing soft and deep until Will moaned again.

“Dance with me Will.”

“Anything, Hannibal. Anything.”

Hannibal growled and kissed at Will’s neck as he began walking them forward until they were at their door. Will already had his keycard to hand and they were through within moments.

It was hungry passion that consumed them then. Both pawing at each other’s clothes until the fabric seemed to work loose of its own accord. When Will was down to his boxers and Hannibal had lost his shirt, Hannibal pushed Will against the wall.

“I love how we move together.” Hannibal breathed against Will’s lips.

Will managed a nod and a whimper. Hannibal’s heart raced in response. It never had when he skated - as much passion as he had for it, he was able to remain cool and collected - never submit to the pressure. And yet a simple utterance from Will could undo him completely.

He moved back for a moment and pulled Will's boxers down before undoing his own trousers and freeing his hard length. He took them both in hand and worked them together, the wall still at Will's back.

"Ah Han.. Hannibal.." Will gasped at the contact of their velvety flesh on the other. A few strokes later and Will was pushing him off. "Bed… on the bed…"

Hannibal nodded, barely having hold of his senses, and did as commanded. Will stepped out of his boxers and sprawled naked before him. Hannibal moaned at the sight before lowering himself down - still partially dressed. When he took them together again Will moved, sliding against him until both of their bodies formed a rhythm that allowed them both to fuck into his fisted hand. One of Will's hands joined his and the sensation was almost too much.

"Will.. you… You're so…" Hannibal tried to find the words, but was unable as the squeeze of Will's hand sent him tumbling over the edge and into a bone shattering orgasm that gave away the intensity of the passion he had been feeling.

He realised Will was cumming too, their seed mixing together as they both worked through their release - still moving together. Still dancing.

Hannibal's mind whited out and the only thing he could think was - how well they moved together, danced together… how well they would skate together.

*

"The Skaters are arriving now. But I have to say, neither Will Graham or his coach Hannibal Lecter seem to have the energy we have come to expect from them." There was something knowing and jovial in the announcers tone that probably should embarrass them both and yet it didn't.

Hannibal smiled at Will and received an accusatory glare in response, though he could tell it was playfully meant.

"Will Graham, you should know better than to stay up all night before a competition." Hannibal admonished as he failed at hiding his grin.

"Yes, perhaps if my coach didn't act so inappropriately…"

Hannibal leaned over for the briefest of moments and brushed his lips against Will's. So quick it might have been missed, but the few gasps in the audience told him it hadn't been. This was reckless he knew. How powerful love was to make people so reckless! There were many gay competitors in figure skating, but being so blatant might hinder or even end a career. What if Will decided not to retire? What if…

"Welcome to the Grand Prix Figure Skating Final - The Free Skate!" The announcement boomed around the auditorium and a cheer went up from the crowd.

He had thought Will wouldn't need him if he retired, but the previous night had taught him to check his assumptions. He had thought Will might no longer need someone to push him to

reveal his true self now that he had. But he was wrong. Love wasn't an empty word for either of them and that love would not be so easily extinguished.

Hannibal was still smiling, but he saw how Will's face dropped with the announcement. Nerves starting to grip him despite his new found confidence. So much rested on this last skate. It was so close!

"Don't worry, you can win the gold. Just believe in yourself." Hannibal whispered, smiling gently. He believed in the words completely, in Will. In the rings that would hopefully be more someday - an assumption that was maybe early rather than entirely wrong.

"Hannibal, I told you before, all I want is for you to be who you are too…" Will grinned as he stood, some of that confidence coming back as he posed with grace and care in his glorious costume. "So don't suddenly start trying to sound like a coach now."

Hannibal couldn't help but play, pretending to be offended as they grinned at each other. What a life it would be with Will Graham, gold medal or not.

*

I've spent half my life watching Hannibal, trying to catch up. And now thanks to him… here I am!

Will glided onto the ice with a grace he was sure he had never truly mastered before. The costume gave him that edge, pulled out that part of himself and revealed it to everyone so that he might embody it. He felt like the ugly duckling turned to the graceful swan. And he had Hannibal to thank for helping him see that in himself.

But for more than that. It couldn't have been anyone that brought that out in him. It had to be Hannibal. The man he was meant to love, he could be no surer of anything else in his life. Hannibal might have brought this out in him anyway, even without the love - Will understood that. There was no confusing that in his mind. Just as there was no confusing that even had Hannibal not helped him to this point he would have still fallen in love with him.

He would still want to marry him.

He shuddered at the thought. Anxious excitement. He hadn't realised that Hannibal had made that assumption, but it seemed obvious now even if he had been oblivious to it himself. He had bought the rings as a promise. He just hadn't quite understood that or what to do with it. But now he knew.

Will moved with ease despite his growing nerves, despite the gasp of the audience as he changed the triple toe loop to a triple flip.

My performance needs to be better than flawless to win the gold.

There was only one way to win gold. He was so close he had to take the chance. He'd had to change his programme. He knew it would soon become clear - he had changed it to have the same difficulty as the last one Hannibal skated at competition.

He moved into a Triple axel. Then another quadruple toe loop in place of the triple flip. Confidence growing anew with each perfect landing, with each cheer of the crowd.

Do you see what I'm doing now Hannibal?

Triple axel, single toe loop, triple salchow.

Do you see me? I don't want this to end here. I want to skate with you forever.

Triple lutz, triple toe loop.

You were born to skate. Becoming my coach wasn't a waste of time and I am proving it now. But you could be so much more… we could be so much more!

Will moved into the last jump - a quad - one of Hannibal's signature moves. He felt as much as heard the gasps from the audience. Definitely felt the rumble and thunder of the cheer as he landed it perfectly and skated gracefully into his final pose. Heart beating, breathing laboured. It had felt like going over a cliff, falling through the water and coming up for air on the other side of the world.

It felt like time had frozen as he allowed his pose to relax and considered for a moment sinking to the ice. He pushed himself, eyes searching for, and finding Hannibal - urging him forward and off the ice.

He reached out and clutched Hannibal's offered arms and allowed himself to be pulled the rest of the way from the ice, his chest still tight every muscle now shaky with exhaustion.

"Thank you Hannibal." Will struggled out the words. "I couldn't have done this without you." It didn't matter if he won or not. That gold held so little meaning now compared to that on his finger.

"See." Hannibal indicated the crowd still cheering, before pulling Will into an embrace. "This is all I ever wanted for you, Will."

Will smiled against Hannibal's chest. He understood well enough - this exhilaration he should have had every time he skated but that Hannibal had helped him unlock by guiding him in being himself. That was worth more than any medal.

"It's beautiful." Will huffed out on a breath, pulling back enough to smile at Hannibal.

One Year Later

"Welcome to the *Eros on Ice* ice show!"

The crowd went insane, and Will let a nervous laugh slip out. The Hasetsu ice rink was even more packed than it had been for *Hot Tubs on Ice* - which seemed like an eternity ago. A different time, different person. Well, same person, but now much more themself.

"Are you ready Will?" Hannibal asked, taking his hand and squeezing it.

“As I’ll ever me.” Will replied, the nervous laugh again, only stopped when Hannibal leaned in and pressed their lips together in a quick, chaste kiss.

Hannibal stepped back and Will got ready to head to the ice, feeling the chorus skaters falling into place behind them. This was so far from anything Will had ever planned.

Hasetsu was just the first show, they had already sold out rinks all over the world - after all an ice show headlined by two Grand Prix World Champions was a draw enough. But it was more than that. After a year of working on this in seclusion, the public wanted to know what had happened with the blossoming romance they had witnessed at last year’s competitions.

After Will had taken gold, with Frank and Peter taking silver and bronze, Will and Hannibal had ended up back at the hot tub hotel. Several days of relaxing and eating gumbo, they had finally discussed their plans for the future.

On the podium Frank had challenged them - he wanted Will to compete again so that he could beat them. There was a strange camaraderie to it that Will was sure meant that they were actually now friends, as friendly as Frank got. But it gave Will pause for thought. They did want to continue skating, there wasn’t much else they loved more. And the competition had been amazing, but it hadn’t always been in the past. They wanted to do something new, something of his own on his own terms.

“Hannibal, I… want to skate. With you.” Will had tentatively admitted during a conversation of gumbo.

“I am sure I can make my come back whilst remaining on as your coach.” Hannibal replied, equally tentative, making Will wonder if Hannibal needed something different too. After all he had left competition for a reason, and that hadn’t changed other than Will being in his life. He still wasn’t getting any younger, still had peaked. Perhaps the idea Will had been unable to shake from their mind for what felt like an age, wasn’t as far fetched as they had initially considered.

“Hannibal, I mean… I want us to skate together.”

Hannibal’s face had lit up.

The memory of it flashed into Will’s mind. Will knew his music cue was about to begin, but it didn’t matter. There was something important they needed to do first. Will turned and walked quickly to where Hannibal stood to the side, waiting for his own cue.

“Will?” Hannibal looked confused and concerned.

“I have to… first I just… Hannibal.” Will took Hannibal’s hands and looked down as their rings shone in the coloured and theatrical lights. Will brought Hannibal’s hand up to his lips and kissed the ring. “Hannibal, this *is* the only gold that ever mattered. Will you marry me?”

Hannibal’s face broke into a wide grin, just as the music started. There was an uncertain shuffling behind them and Will realised the chorus were confused and they needed to get out on the ice and open the show… as tempting as it was to kiss that smiling face.

So, both grinning ear to ear, Will broke from Hannibal and moved quickly out onto the ice, having only missed a short part of the intro music, still enough time to wave at the crowd and take position on the ice before the music truly started.

And then Will was away. Skating, dancing. The routine they knew so well - an adaptation of Hannibal's *Stay Close To Me* routine that Will had skated in that now infamous video. Will moved effortlessly across the ice, knowing the chorus would join them soon - that this number would be a spectacle built on throughout the entire show. But before then, before they could come out and join the dance, Hannibal had his part.

Will felt him as much as saw him, sensing the warm body move next to them as they synchronised perfectly. The crowd was roaring and Will was elated. They had worried and wondered - what would the reaction be? The crowd were whooping and hollering in a near undignified manner as Will and Hannibal began to skate together - a pairs skate.

The crowd was still cheering Hannibal's appearance when the cheer rose louder as he lifted Will. Will couldn't help their wide grin, despite the solemnity of the routine. Not that they could bring themselves to care. As Will's skates touched down again they swapped - Will taking the lead role as they continued through turns.

A synchronised jump and they were together again. Dancing. On and on, the sound of the crowd a distant blur as they became lost in each other.

They were both panting and shaking as they moved into final position and posed. The chorus skaters swirling around them until they too came to a stop as the music did. The crowd roared. Everyone was on their feet, the audience clearly satisfied with what they had come to see: the love affair of the century from the reaction! Will grinned, laughter bubbling within them, joy writ large across their face.

"Yes." Hannibal breathed the word close to Will's ear.

Will's grin grew so wide their face hurt. Will turned, moving now so that they were pressed against Hannibal. Their future husband.

They pulled Hannibal tight to them and pushed their lips together, a deep and passionate kiss that sent the crowd wild again.

Perhaps a spring wedding when the show moved to Europe, perhaps in Barcelona. Will knew just the tailor who could help with their suits.

There's a place you just can't reach, unless you have a dream that's too large to bear alone. Win or lose, we call everything on the ice - love.

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